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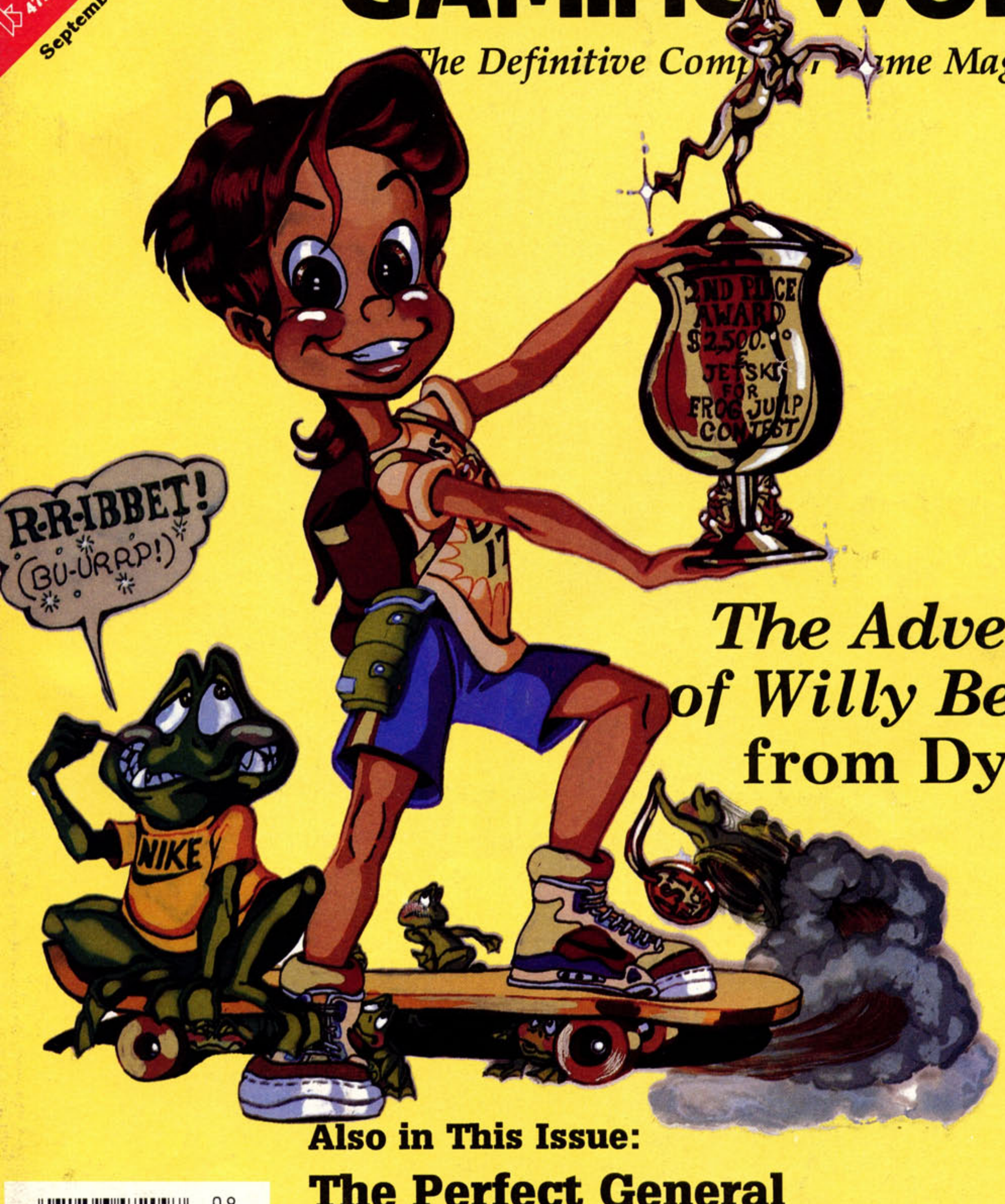
Number 86

September 1991

Martian Dreams ● Computer Third Reich ● NHL Hockey

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

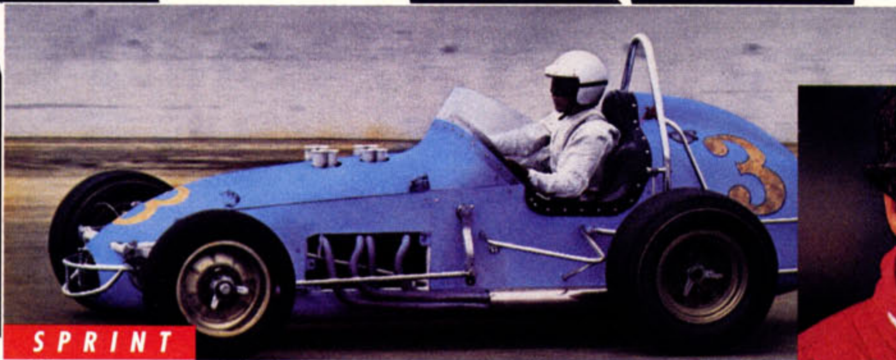
The Definitive Computer Game Magazine



The Adventures of Willy Beamish from Dynamix

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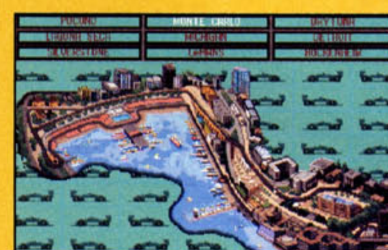




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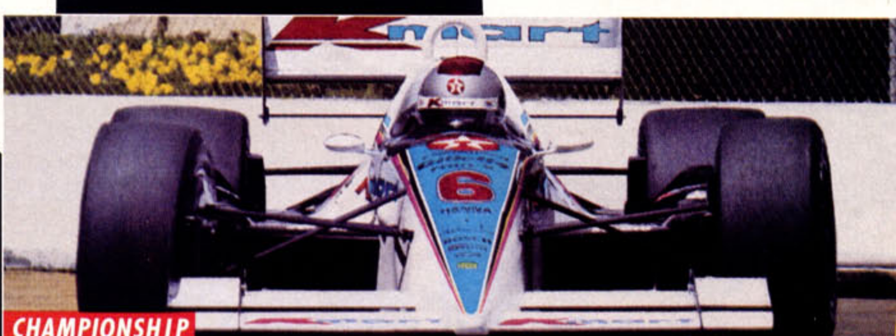




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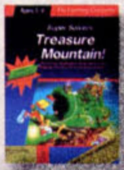
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Sir-Tech's Wizardry®: Bane of the Cosmic Forge

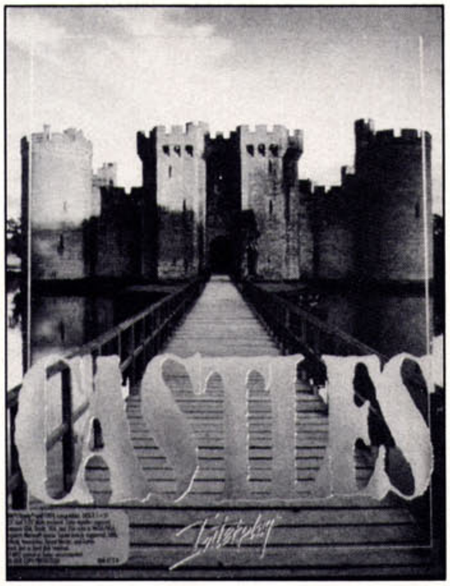
System Requirements: IBM® PC, XT, AT, 386, 486 or compatible with 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or higher, CGA, EGA, VGA, MGA or IBM PS/2, and headset or external speaker.

Circle Reader Service #20

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Covering the World of Computer Games for Ten Years

September 1991 Number 86



Castles / pg 120



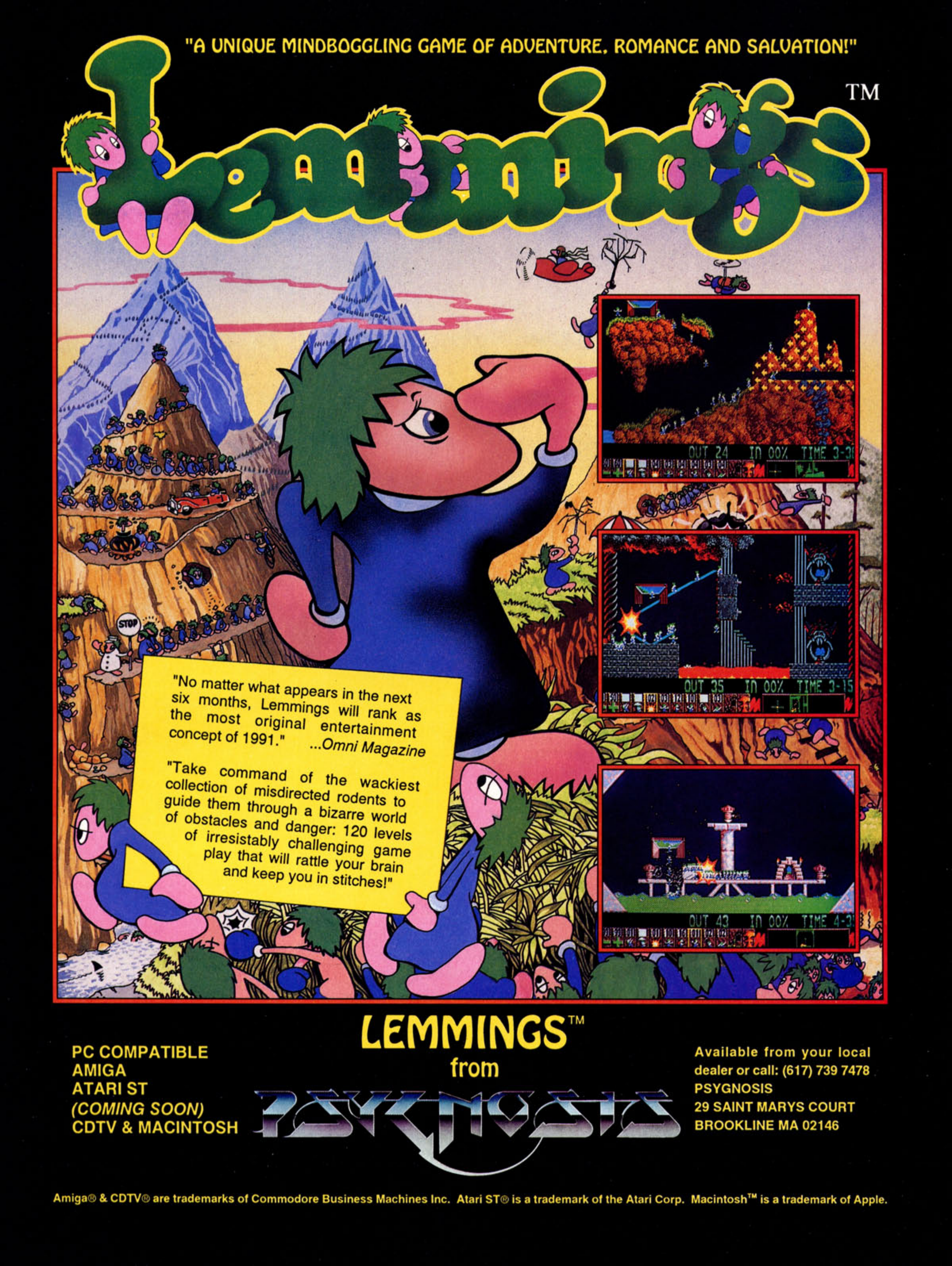
Willie Beamish / pg 10



Cybergenic Ranger / pg 44

Features

Departments


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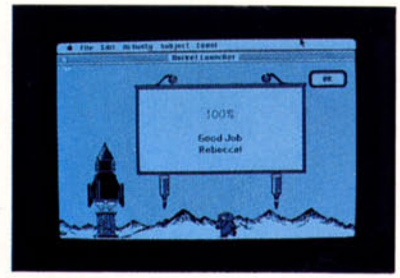
WHERE IN AMERICA'S PAST IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?: Once again, the ACME Detective Agency is after its greatest nemesis, Carmen Sandiego. This time, crimson Carmen, the V.I.L.E. villainess, has a plucky penchant for past prizes. Against her hilarious henchmen (sixteen new nasties appear), players will ponder the plethora of pages pertaining to *What Happened When* in their effort to recapture that red-coated, raven-haired rascal, Carmen. The sound and graphics of these cases are so good, they are best described as "pre-CD-ROM." Saddle up, pilgrim. It's time to save America. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Davidson
Torrance, CA

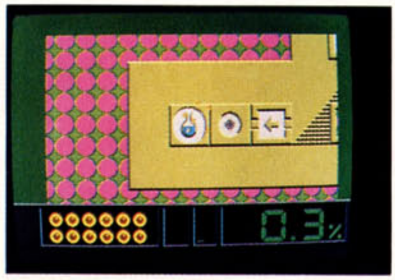
NEW MATH BLASTER PLUS!: Another marriage of social consciousness and edutainment, the *New Math Blaster Plus!* allows younger players the chance to play the role of "Blasternaut" (with a trusted robot friend, Spot) by solving math problems and thus saving the planet from marauding Trash Aliens. This sequel to *Math Blaster* not only adds the expected upgrades in sound and graphics but also includes a new problem-solving game which was not in the original program. For children ages six to twelve, *New Math Blaster Plus!* offers progressively difficult math problems covering addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals and percentages. Many clever features include a pre-test to set player levels and an award certificate maker for achievement in math. Macintosh ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #2.



Where in America's Past Is...?



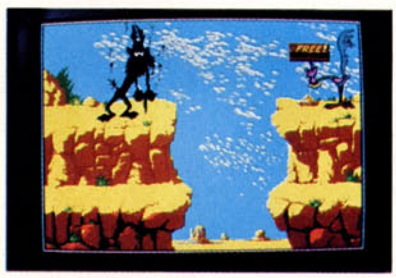
New Math Blaster Plus!



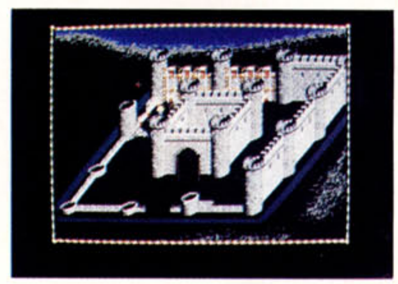
Abyss



World Class Track & Field



Bugs Bunny Cartoon Workshop



Castles

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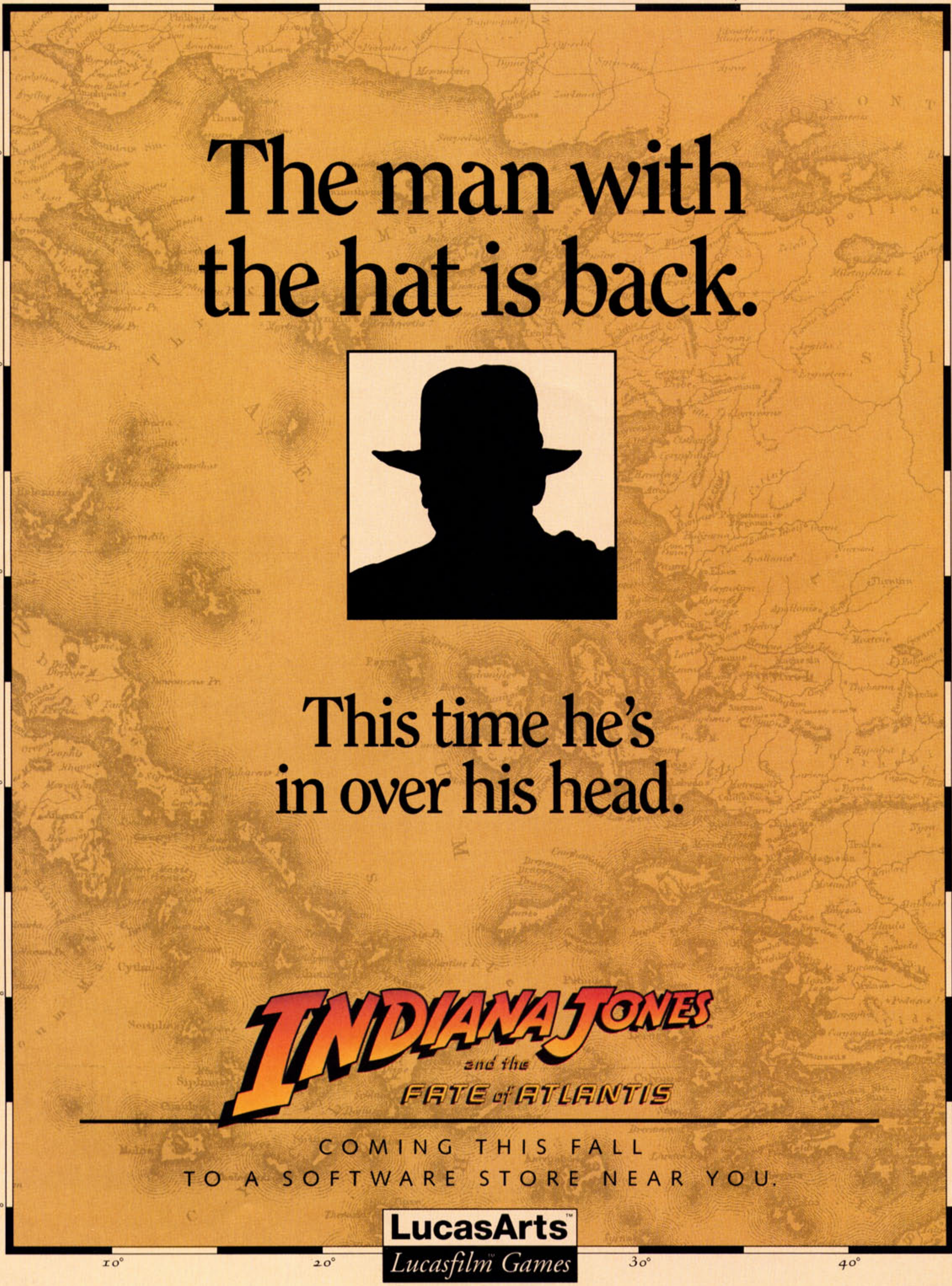
Free Spirit Software
Kutztown, PA

ABYSS: A slower-paced game based (loosely) on *Pac Man*, *Abyss* has the player pushing his luck and a puck (called a Quake-O-Mate) around a narrow pathway full of funky spaces and populated by evil nasties. The player's on-screen character strives to stop an evil force which has diabolically removed all of the guard rails which once surrounded the pathway. If the character cannot successfully keep away from the nasties and stop the evil force, rubberized baby rabbits will start to fall off the pathway and into the abyss like...well, like lemmings. In other words, the rubber baby bunny bumpers are gone and the player has to restore them. Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

Lance Haffner Games
Nashville, TN

BREAK POINT PRO TENNIS: There's *something* about a Lance Haffner game. These statistics-based sports games are exercises in strategy and decision-making rather than tests of player's reflexes via arcade action. There are no flashy graphics, just plenty of options. *Break Point Pro Tennis* is a case in point. Here, players select their options for their player abilities, styles and net strategies. After selecting the court type, the positive and negative ratings of the players are compared for study, including court ratings, doubles ability and morale (whether they are psyched positively or negatively). Playing the actual matches means selecting from menus for service, returns and net options. Doubles can be played, and original "players" can be created to supplement the database of over 200 rated pros. C-64 ($39.99). Circle Reader Service #4.

WORLD CLASS TRACK & FIELD: Even with some rudimentary graphics, watching computerized track & field is about as much fun as watching the laundry tumble in the dryer. With 600 athletes



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from around the world (and from recent history), players can run single events or host decathlons. Players can invent their own athletes to compete and opt to try some different "strategies" in the various events to win. Players can control individual athletes or let the computer run them and just watch and enjoy the competition. C-64 ($39.99). Circle Service #5.

Hi Tech Expressions
584 Broadway
New York, NY 10012

THE BUGS BUNNY CARTOON WORKSHOP: Although something of a "poor man's version" of *The Disney Animation Studio*, for far less money and with a much simpler interface, this package was programmed more "for kids of all ages." Bugs, Daffy, Elmer, Tweety, Sylvester, the Coyote and Road Runner can all be directed with certain actions and amid various backdrops. Each action makes up a 10-second scene and these scenes can be strung together to make entire animated features. An easy to use "point and click" icon interface gets one seated quickly in the director's chair. All that is missing are Mel Blanc's voice characterizations (along with external sound support) and Tex Avery's directing talents (which the user must provide). IBM ($49.95). Circle Service #6.

Interplay
Santa Ana, CA

CASTLES: As previewed in issue number 79, this castle building simulator ("SimCastle?") places the player as a king who must build castles despite attacking Celtic hordes and the perilous task of influence-wielding when balancing favors between church, guilds and nobility. Players can opt for games where one, three or eight castles must be constructed in order to solidify their kingdoms. Once again, fill up the breech, boys. IBM ($59.95). Circle Service #7.

Konami
Buffalo Grove, IL

BASEBALL CARD COLLECTOR: While this isn't a game, we thought our readers might want to be aware of it. Living up to a big promise, *Baseball Card Collector* was designed to handle all baseball card sets from all manufacturers, create card inventories, set values (market and personal) and gives its database users statistics and other information that might come in handy when playing in a rotisserie league or preparing to visit the local card show. With report features that can be printed out and a "Line Drive" bulletin board from which to download the latest information and price values, this is a



Baseball Card Collector



Elite Plus



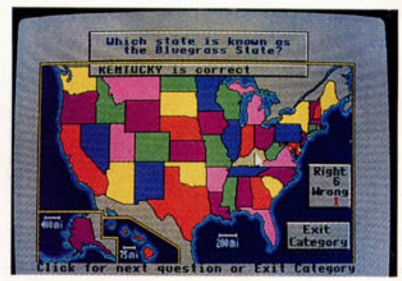
Demoniak



Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships...



Geo Jigsaw



Geo Puzzle USA

very impressive database for the myriad of baseball card collectors in our readership. IBM ($49.95) Circle Service #8.

MicroProse
Hunt Valley, MD

ELITE PLUS: From their "Microplay Software" line, this sequel to Britain's award-winning space exploration game of 1986, *Elite*, continues in the traditions of space exploration, trading and combat. Getting a full MicroProse treatment (3-D polygon-filled graphics, new sounds and twice as many missions), the game is much more elaborate than its predecessor in terms of features. Like other games of this "Han Solo" space genre (*Sundog* leaps to mind), the player must make a name for himself as a space trader by making wily bargains, repairing and upgrading his vessel and shooting straight in space combat. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II: OPERATION DESERT STORM SCENARIO DISK: With the most action since CNN covered the war in the Persian Gulf, players can now hop into their *F-15 Strike Eagle II* games and flatten some Iraqi chemical and biological weapons sites. New features include Roland sound support (plus improved drivers for other boards) and night missions (in the Persian Gulf theater only). Other new combat theaters include the North Cape (Norway, Sweden, Finland and the portions of the Soviet Union above the Arctic Circle) and Central Europe. IBM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

Palace Software
London, Great Britain

DEMONIAK: In this text adventure game, the player takes on a space-opera role as a heroic adventurer in the company of Doc Cortex (nominally the cleverest man in the universe). Cortex is attempting to plug up the hole in the fabric of time and space which Demoniak (evil incarnate) and hordes have come through. Doc must create a superbomb to seal Demoniak's hole. In-

(Continued on page 126)

The Continuing Adventure of Bringing Willy Beamish to the Computer Screen



Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" which CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended to provide the "final word" on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is completely finished. Sneak Previews are designed to inform our readers about upcoming games and generate excitement about the "state of the art" of computer game design in general.



The Adventures of Willy Beamish is an interactive cartoon on the cutting edge of technology. Yet many people at last summer's Consumer Electronics Show and many people who have never seen a computer game before are not responding to demonstrations and early looks at the game with the appropriate "Gee Whiz!" attitude. One wonders what the "problem" is.

The alleged "problem" may very well be that the game and its development has succeeded too well. The characters do not simply enter a room awkwardly and waddle through the limited space allotted to them on the computer's map of each "room" (location) within the game's geography. Rather, **Dynamix** has created detailed and, many times, special animations in order to be sure that the characters not only move more realistically than characters in earlier adventure games, but also use more "live" areas on the screen. So, the reason many people are not seeing the game as *special* is because *The Adventures of Willy Beamish*





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JIM2

Jim2 pits your Bf109 against as many as 37 RAF fighters. Holy smoke!

TOUGH2

Touch2 has you at the controls of a lone Ju-87 Stuka bomber. Your mission is to defeat two flights of the faster Hurricane Mk1 and complete a dive bombing run. Expect some pretty hot action.

LORDHAHA

Lordhaha has you and a novice rear gunner in a lone Bf110 where you must avoid four flights of Hurricanes and Spitfires to complete a bombing and strafing mission. You'll need all your wits about you for this one.



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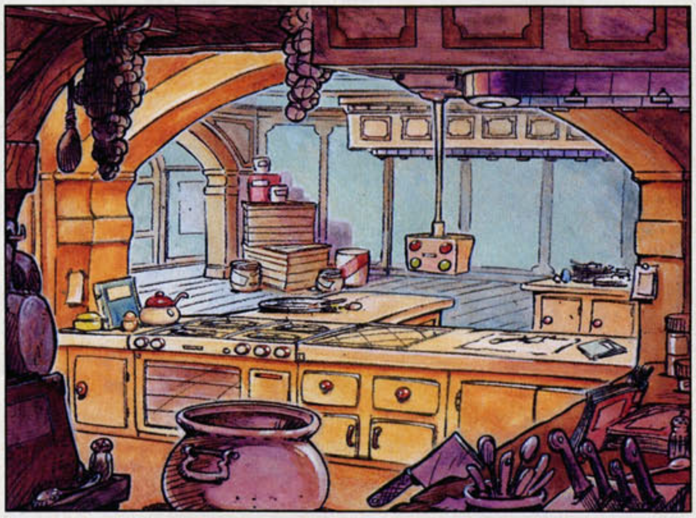
In Canada, call 1-800-828-7927. Be sure to specify which IBM format your copy of *Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain* is (IBM 5.25" or IBM 3.5") so we can be sure to send you the correct disk. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

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looks a lot like a traditional animated cartoon.

This animated cartoon look is *not* coincidental. **Dynamix** founder, Jeff Tunnell, has not only deliberately cultivated the *appearance* of an animated cartoon, but he has hired animators, script writers, directors and producers of animated cartoons to develop the project. Anyone who visits the **Dynamix** offices and observes the animation taking place may very well think that he or she has entered *The Twilight Zone* and stumbled across an animation studio in some golden age of animation. Case in point: One may see several animators per room, etching frantically atop their light tables to attain their equivalent of 12-40 cels per day, while pen and pencil images of character studies, backgrounds and storyboard tests surround them on the office walls.





Animator credits on *Willy* represent some of the hottest talent in the field of animation. Pat Clark, one of the artists who rendered character sketches (he gave us the voluptuous nurse), worked on *The Simpsons* during his last Hollywood assignment. In addition, Sheri Wheeler, who rendered Willy and most of the male characters in the game, has a background which includes projects at **Hanna-Barbera** and **DIC** (pronounced "deek") studios. Stephan Martiniere, who also worked at **DIC**, rendered Shawn Sharp's backgrounds in pencil so that Brent Burkett could "ink" them. Disney alumnus Rene Garcia, best known for his work on the undersea backgrounds for *The Little Mermaid*, also pencilled backgrounds for Burkett to ink.



Prime Time Profiles

As if this partial list of animator's credits didn't already give the project a professional Hollywood feel, a fortuitous confluence of talent occurred in Eugene, Oregon (**Dynamix**'s locale) during the early days of the project when self-imposed Los Angeles exiles Tony and Meryl Perutz saw an advertisement for writers in the local paper.

In addition to their work on scripts and their various backgrounds in script approval for major Hollywood production companies, Tony had spent a portion of his career as a show-biz executive who projected the production costs of NBC's entire prime time schedule and Meryl had spent time overseeing production for **DIC** Studios. They had moved to Eugene to get away from a creative business that had ceased to inspire them any longer and they were just about to reluctantly return to Southern California as their idealized Oregonian experiment crashed about them. Then, they saw the ad.

The couple not only typed up an impressive resume, but they added a screenplay treatment of their discovery of the advertisement, complete with humorous references to their one-time preoccupation with **ICOM**'s *Shadowgate* (published by **Mindscape**). The couple's background enables them to script *Willy* with more of a scenarist's eye and enables the game to be, simultaneously, an analogue to a television situation comedy, made-for-television movie and animated cartoon.

The major difference between these diverse art forms? With situation comedies and film, one can see "dailies," rough cuts of the day's filming, but can accomplish little with film footage that "just won't do" except to reshoot it. With animated films, Meryl says there is (at best) a 16-week cycle from script to finished (or near-finished) preliminary footage. In *The Adventures of Willy Beamish*, however, the game is continually being assembled and tweaked on the company's local area network. What this means is that one not only has access to "dailies" (from the time they begin to animate pencil tests), but one has access to up-to-the-minute changes. More importantly, one can quickly change that which doesn't work (compared to reshooting or reanimating).

Further, Tony's experience with prime-time television production means that, as a screenwriter, he is not satisfied with placing the family's father at the dinner table. Rather, the father has to make an entrance to "set up" the scene at the family dinner table. The sitcom perspective has challenged both the animators and programmers of *Willy Beamish* on several occasions.

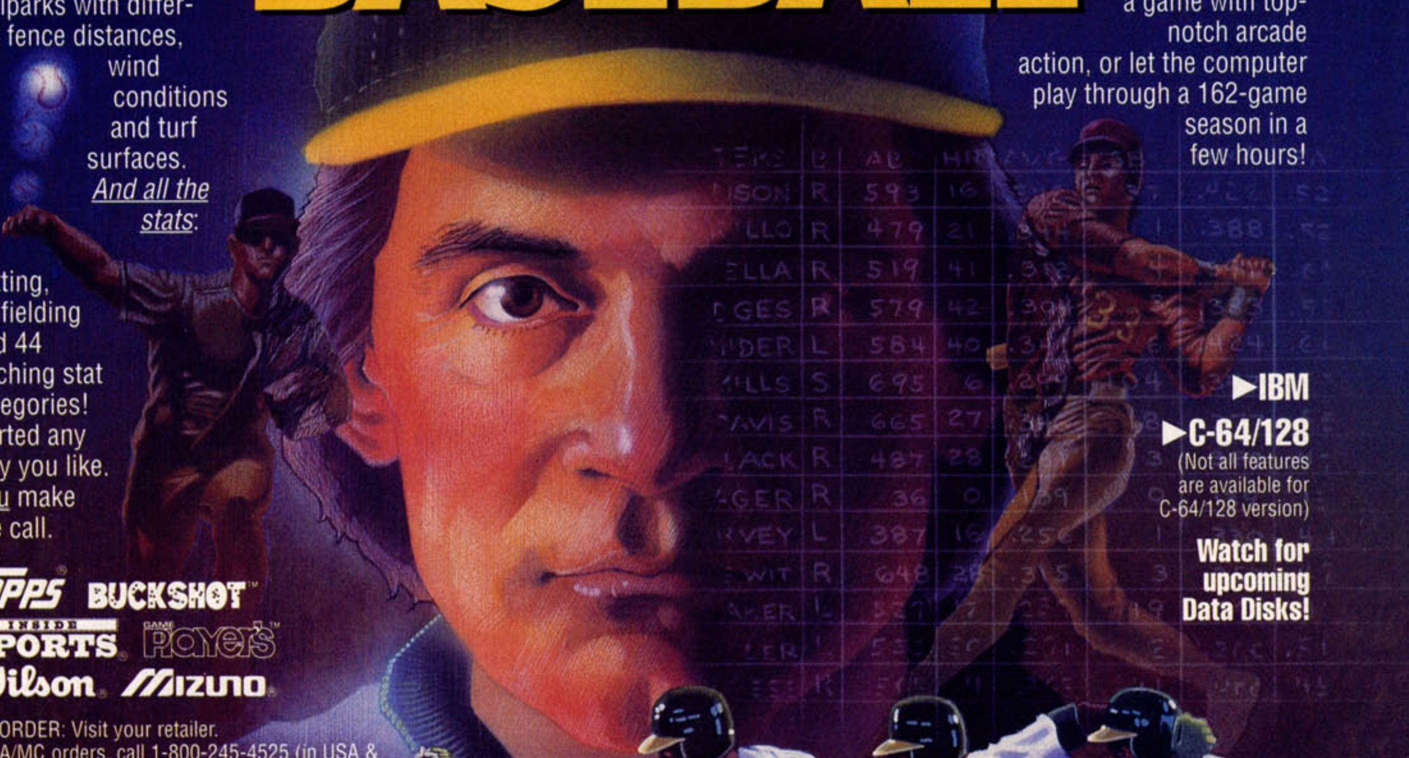
Indeed, the varied writing backgrounds of the *Beamish* screenwriters provides for entertaining dialogue and situations that appeal to both children and adults. As in prime time television, there is always a tension between what is really funny and what might be unacceptable for a younger audience. The tension exists in this product, particularly, since it appeals to such a wide-ranging audience. The result, at its best, is a lot like a Jay Ward cartoon where the dialogue seems directed at two levels. The humor is, at times, very sophomoric and, at times, very sophisticated. They both play in Peoria.

Wild and Willy

Jeff Tunnell decided to coordinate *The Adventures of Willy Beamish* because he was tired of the dark, dismal future depicted in his successful *Rise of the Dragon*. Instead of telling a dark, violent and gloomy story, he wanted to tell a colorful, light and airy story. It reminds us of monster-monger Stephen King writ-

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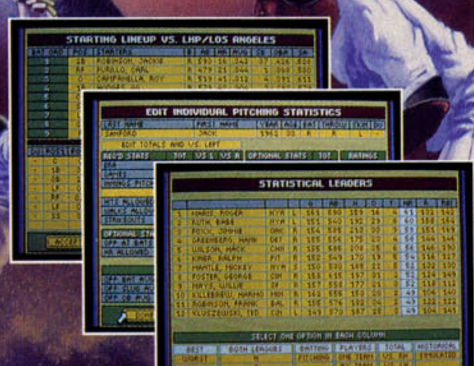
►IBM

►C-64/128 (Not all features are available for C-64/128 version)

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ing *The Eyes of the Dragon* because he wanted his young daughter to know he could write about something other than nocturnal horrors. Part of Jeff's goal was to create a game that his kids, as well as other children, would want to play. He has apparently succeeded, since Heidi (Tunnell's young daughter of single-digit years) plays the current version of the game and leaves "playtest" notes on her dad's computer. ("Why is the clock always the same time?" and "Even if he gets out of school early, the mail truck always gets there first.") Likewise, the Perutzes note that their youngest son is convinced that Willy and Tiffany are in love with each other and that he really cares about the characters. (They kiddingly note that they are going to have to explain to him that brothers and sisters are not "appropriate" love interests, even in a computer game, but they do note that he is tremendously concerned with how the characters feel about each other and that he relates to each character as if they are distinct individuals.)





Since **Dynamix** was already using techniques that translated (using a scanner) pencilled (and later, inked) sketches into files which could manipulated on the computer and, since these files were eventually turned into animated (albeit with limited animation) sequences, it only seemed logical for the company to produce an actual animated feature. Happily, it has come together like one. Tunnell even envisions the day it might become a televised series.

The game has evolved with the design team's understanding of what a computer game can provide. Jeff originally expected the interface to be handled from a first-person perspective, just like *Rise of the Dragon* and *Heart of China*. Meryl and Tony Perutz thought about this approach seriously, since their previous experience with computer games was largely limited to the first-person *Shadowgate*, but they decided that the sitcom analogy required the game to put the protagonist on the screen. They preferred having the character interact with other characters on the screen to having characters talk directly to the off-screen player. The change in perspective even helped the design team to "block" on-screen movement as if directing a stage play or teleplay. The design team would direct live actors (members of the **Dynamix** staff) through the scenes and later would watch the pencil tests to determine if the blocking (on-stage or on-screen movement) was effective.



And Now, the Rest of the Story

From a simple theme, originally conceived as somewhat similar to a feature film (*The Wiz*), the story evolved from a story about getting to the "Nintari Championships" to a branching storyline about people and relationships. Although the game still functions around a few days in which Willy tries to overcome the obstacles keeping him from the championships, the writers have used the game to parody the shallowness of materialism (with the family's reaction to Gordon [Mr.] Beamish's career reverse and Leona Humpford's "Cruella DeVille"-esque ruthlessness as particularly representative) and contrasted it with the ethical dilemma of Gordon accepting a job counter to his social concerns and Willy learning to help others (whether animal friends or entire city populations) instead of simply "helping himself." Topical subjects like environmental concerns are handled as a plot device and sensitive subjects like romance are handled with the discreet mystery which most pre-adolescents would attribute to such concerns (such as when Leona and Louis Stoole, the plumber, are playing "adult games" when Willy tries to sneak by the game room). Any risque humor is handled with carefully selected double entendres rather than blatant exposition. It is truly a terraced game for many audiences.

The Adventures of Willy Beamish, whether its audiences recognize it at the outset or not, is one of those special products that advances the state of computer game design. It features new concern for storytelling, is an excellent example of the difference between a studio approach to a project and the "lone wolf" approach of computer gaming's early years, expands the potential audience for computer games and challenges some of the tacit assumptions of the genre (with regard to on-screen movement and the length of non-interactive scenes, for example). As of press time, *The Adventures of Willy Beamish* is not quite finished, but the product has already taken on a life of its own and captured the heart of anyone from six to sixty who has actually had a chance to *play* any portion of the game. **cgw**




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The Boys of Silicon

A Digitized Doubleheader

As this issue reaches the newsstands, the dog days of August are near, the pennant race in each division is becoming more and more clear and two new baseball games are about to compete in the "World Series of software marketing," the 1991 Christmas season.



Earl Weaver Baseball II

Earl Weaver Baseball II, with its new VGA graphics, sound board support, large on-screen ballplayers that fill the computer screen and new instant replay angles (complete with a "Director" function to let players determine camera angles before the game), almost gives the player the feeling that he/she is covering the game for television and attempting to bring the colorful spectacle to life on the broadcast screen. It is to the MS-DOS world of today what the original was to the Amiga world, a brilliant and exciting product.

There is considerably more to the improvement of *EWBII* than its presentation, however. One of the knocks made against the original program and *particularly* against the MS-DOS version 1.5 (where the computer manager insisted on bringing in outfielders as relief pitchers, even when the team had a fully staffed bullpen) was that statistical replays were flawed (see the article on "Dirty Data" in this issue). Statistics buffs feel that computer-versus-computer replays should give results reasonably close to the actual season's data. Yet, the *EWB* data seemed consistently skewed.

Part of the reason for this disparity was the fact that *EWB* was the first computer baseball game to combine physics with the pure statistics. Many of us believed that this was a positive factor, lending more realism to the game and offering those satisfying touches like astro-turf singles and "big green monster" doubles. Further, many statistics buffs want the capability of doing the number crunching of an entire season in a hurry, without worrying about each individual game. *EWBII* meets both of these desires. Statistics buffs who *want* the reality of physical law combined in the outcome of the game, but couldn't care less about graphics, can toggle the graphics off and have a faster game. Statistics buffs who do not want their games resolved with the spin and bounce of physics involved can opt for an even faster game that takes under two minutes for the computer to resolve.

Naturally, players can still opt for full graphics, statistics and physics in action mode, managerial ("manage only") mode or "play and manage" mode. As in the original game, action means that the human player's reflexes control the results on the on-screen field; "manage only" means that the human player's strategy will combine with the statistical and physical models in the game to determine the results and "play and manage" will combine both modes to create a game where the human player can be a "player manager" and experience the best of both worlds (sacrificing statistical reliability in favor of immediate playability).

The action options in *Earl Weaver Baseball II* have been greatly enhanced. Now, pitchers can decide on the type of pitch and pitch location from two nine-point grids (representing each possible position of the joystick) and then decide whether to pitch out, pick off or deliver the pitch to the plate. Hitters can still determine whether to bunt or swing away, as well as when to run forward or retrace their steps.

In addition to more color and larger figures, the instant replay capacity of *EWBII* has been enhanced by the addition of camera angles. One can choose between six sets of camera angles (the standard television establishing shot behind home plate, side views from behind first base looking toward third and vice-versa, and from behind all the fielders, looking toward home plate). If one has no desire to "direct" his own game, one can use "Director" mode which will enable the program to choose the best positions to show the action from. If one desires to be the director of the program himself, it is possible to lock the view from one of the six standard angles. Then, all pitches are shown from behind the plate, but all action from the locked view. Naturally, cameras have the capacity to zoom in or out. About the only thing missing from *EWBII*'s replay capability is the ability to save plays. However, one *can* save some plays via a trick with the locked camera mode (see the manual section on "Locked Camera Angles") if one saves the game immediately.

In short, *Earl Weaver Baseball II* is not simply an upgrade, it is a complete redesign. It offers something new and improved for both casual and dedicated gamers, both statistical buffs and action fanatics. *Earl Weaver Baseball II* is a definite contender.

Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball

Like *Earl Weaver Baseball II*, *Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball* (*TLUB*) features VGA graphics, large on-screen ballplayers and full sound support. Again, like its closest competitor, the game features both a "play and manage" and a "manage only" mode (the latter for pure statistics buffs). However, *Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball* also allows the human managers to set the difficulty level of the "play and manage" mode. They can choose to only pitch and bat, allowing the computer to handle the fielding and base-running for them; pitch, bat and run so that the computer simply handles the fielding or attempt everything (fielding, pitching, batting and running).

Rather than using simple grid locations

(Continued on page 20)



Actual IBM EGA screen photos

In *The Magic Candle*, 1989's role-playing game of the year, you saved the lands of Deruvia from the foul archdemon Dreax! But that triumph is past!

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Dark Secrets of the Dirty Data

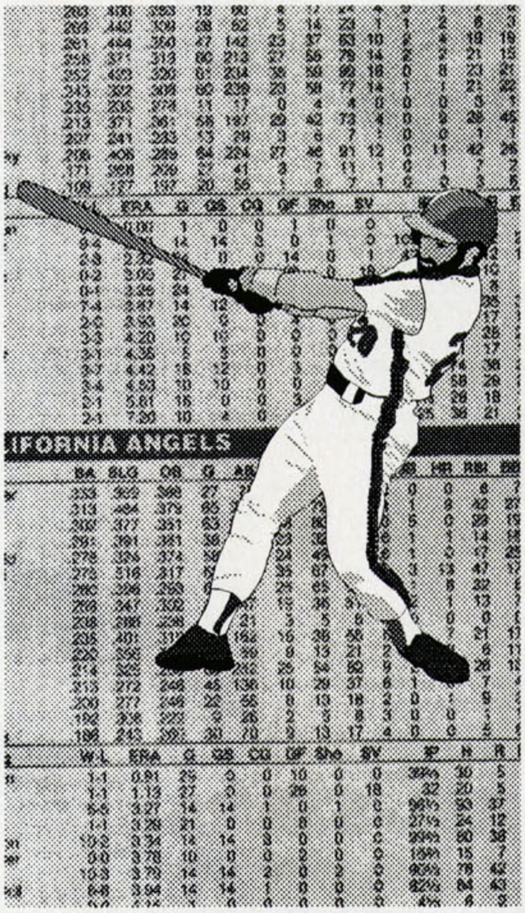
What They Don't Want You To Know About Baseball Statistics

by Win Rogers

When one plays a computer baseball game based on a statistical model, the illusion is created that, with so many numbers to crunch, these games can give a pretty good picture of how the Oakland Athletics of today would have fared against Charlie Finley's As of the early 1970s or against Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics of 1929-31, or how the 1962 Mets would have done with Lou Gehrig instead of Marv Thorneberry at first base.

However, the more one knows about statistics and the farther back in history one goes for teams and players, the more skeptical one becomes. Even when simply replaying the 1990 season with current player disks, the models of games like *MicroLeague Baseball: The Manager's Challenge* and *Earl Weaver Baseball 1.5* are flawed. Some of the data that drive the simulations are subjective, either in the form of rating scales or guesstimates when data that are not available must be faked. Most of the rest are what statisticians call "dirty" or "raw" data. Baseball researchers are reconstructing missing data from old newspaper records and designing more sophisticated statistical measures, but it is a never-ending task and uncertainties will always remain. There is simply no way to clean up the data enough so that simulated players from different eras can meet on anything really resembling a level playing field.

Baseball statistics used by these simulations are "dirty" in that they were gathered at various times and places with changing definitions and under differing playing conditions, equipment, rules and levels of competition. They are "raw" in that they are based on simple frequency counts (like the number of home runs a player hits during a season) and ratios derived from them (like Batting Average or Earned Run Average). They have not been adjusted to factor out the effect of playing half the games in a hitter's park like Fenway or a pitcher's park like the Astrodome. They have not been "normalized," that is, put on a scale that measures how far above or below average they fall for a particular league and year (SAT scores are an example of normalized data). Subjective rating scales are a primitive mechanism for reducing the ill effects of these raw data.



Game designers' extreme emphasis on statistical accuracy may be misguided. We can accept "fantasy baseball" for what it is and enjoy playing simulated baseball games on the computer. The fun of matching all-star teams against each other or replaying classic World Series matchups is akin to the pleasures of old-fashioned Hot Stove League meetings around the cracker barrel. One can enjoy managing a classic team of the past like the Big Red Machine without worrying about the accuracy of the simulation. But the trend toward more statistical detail can be a nuisance. The new statistical breakdowns (lefty versus righty, grounder versus fly ball, etc.) are only available for the last ten years or so. The more of them which are included in simulations, the harder it is to add older players and teams to the game, since the data asked for may be hard to find or nonexistent. One must do extensive historical research, rely on guesswork, or be dependent on manufacturers' decisions about what rosters and players are made available (at a price), and how missing data elements are filled in or compensated for.

Knowing the limitations of the data that fuel these games will enable a player to become a more intelligent game buyer and will help him/her get the most out of whichever game is purchased. One may opt for a game with less statistical baggage than another if it better suits a personal gaming style. Here are some hints to alert players to the limitations of baseball statistics. If one knows *Total Baseball* and the *Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract*, they will come as no surprise.

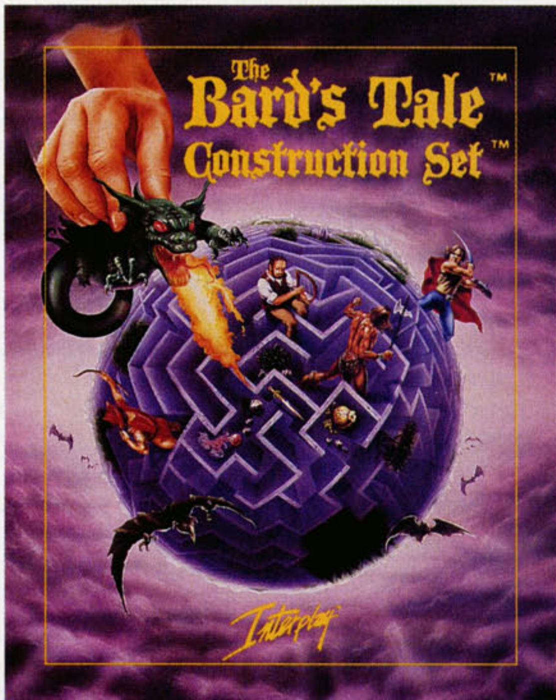
Impure or Biased Simulations

It is obvious that when a statistics-based game also includes eye-hand arcade action, the results will be affected. But even if one is simply managing a team against a friend or against the computer, managerial choices may also skew the results. Only computer-versus-computer matchups avoid these sources of distortion. However, the computer manager has been programmed with assumptions from today's game that may not be fair to players from other eras. Some game designers load the dice by including routines to insure that records accumulated over a simulated season will not vary too much from real-life data. If a player hits too many home runs in the first ten games, his home run potential in later games will drop. But this dilutes the effect of putting the player up against different competition where we wouldn't expect the same results.

Missing Data

Breakdowns of batting performance versus right-handed and left-handed pitchers are a good example of unavailable data for older players. Some games include algorithms that will result in overall lefty-righty differentials when the data is not

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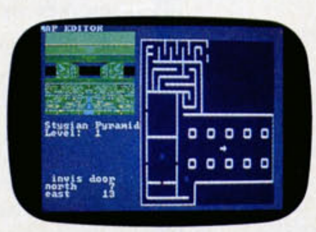
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available, but will not produce realistic results for individual players such as the great left-handed screwballer Carl Hubbell, particularly effective against right-handed batters. There can be no universal algorithm for base-running effectiveness, since Caught Stealing data is not available for most of the first half of the century.

Guesstimates, Ratings and Fudging

Some data elements in a player's performance profile are not objective, but instead represent somebody's guesstimate to replace a missing data element, or a subjective assessment of the player's ability in a certain aspect of the game. Manuals rarely tell us much about how the numbers are arrived at. Some of *EWB*'s ratings are apparently based on formulae involving real statistics, but with a fudge factor added when the designer chooses. The fudging can get out of hand. *EWB*, for example, secretly gives a patched-together statistical profile of Roger Bresnahan, allegedly from 1903 but actually combining his 1903 batting statistics and his 1907 fielding statistics.

Changes in Definitions and Rules

It is impossible to have a satisfactory algorithm for a player's ability to lay down a sacrifice bunt, since the Sacrifice statistic has had different definitions (sometimes including sacrifice flies). American League and National League pitching records since 1973 are not directly comparable because of the presence of the Designated Hitter in the American League. There is an automatic bias whenever a National League team plays an American League team in a simulation.

Players, Parks and Playing Conditions

Every player's performance is affected in countless ways by his team — how well they turn the double play behind him, how many other good hitters there are in the lineup to keep opposing pitchers honest — and the field where he plays half his games. Over time there are changes in equipment (such as gloves), playing styles (such as the use of the bullpen), and playing fields (such as domed stadiums) that affect player statistics. Even if a baseball simulation can recreate different stadium dimensions and create a grass-versus-turf differential, it cannot tell whether a player's statistics being fed into the simulation were achieved on grass in the dead ball era or primarily on today's artificial turf. One cannot plug Ty Cobb's .420 batting average from 1911 into a computer game, match him against Bob Gibson with his 1.12 ERA from 1968, and pretend that the result of this matchup is an accurate reflection of their relative abilities — no matter how many times the simulation is run.

While there will never be a model that overcomes these difficulties, there are better ways of building a baseball simulation model. The next generation of games will probably make more use of normalized data that factor out park differences, following the trail blazed by Pete Palmer and the *Total Baseball* team. They will probably also have even more statistical breakdowns that take advantage of the rich trove of current statistical data and newly reconstructed data from the past. **CGW**

The Boys of Silicon

(Continued from page 16)

to handle the pitch locations (as in *EWBII*), *TLUB* uses variations on the theme. To be sure, one aims by moving the joystick or arrow keys in the grid direction where one wants to pitch, *but* the more one presses the joystick or arrow key when pointed a given direction, the farther the ball will move in that direction. This gives the player controlling the pitcher more flexibility in moving the ball around and mixing up his pitches.

In *TLUB*, batters have more flexibility, as well. They not only can opt to bunt or swing away, but they can choose to swing simply to make contact (in order to protect a runner in a "hit and run" situation or in an attempt to advance a runner via a hit to the other side of the infield or a fly ball out when there is less than one out) or to swing for the fences by choosing the power option.

Further, most baseball games have rosters which are restricted to a 25-man roster. *Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball* recognizes the need for competent reserves, so it allows team "owners" to choose 12 pitchers and 18 position players to use over the course of a season. Only 25 can be "active," but when players are injured, the human managers can "activate" some of the players on the five-man reserve list.

Another nice touch in *TLUB* is the "Streak Rating." Players can be rated from A-H in this rating. This notes the fact that some players inevitably start off the season on fire, but then tail off in production, while other players start off slowly and become "Mr. October"s. The new rating means that one will get a realistic view of Ryne Sandberg- and Reggie Jackson-style players (Ryno usually has a rough first couple of months of the season, Jackson performed better as the season closed). It is an impressive addition. **CGW**

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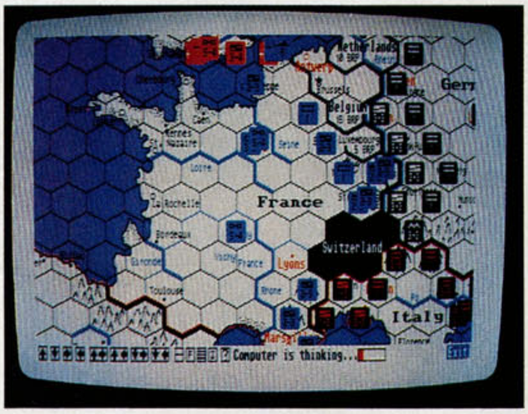
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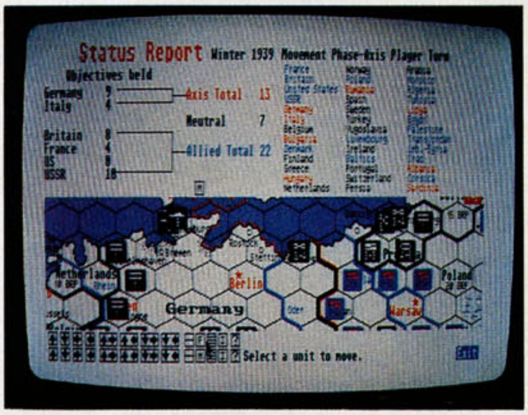
A Sneak Preview of Avalon Hill's Computer Third Reich

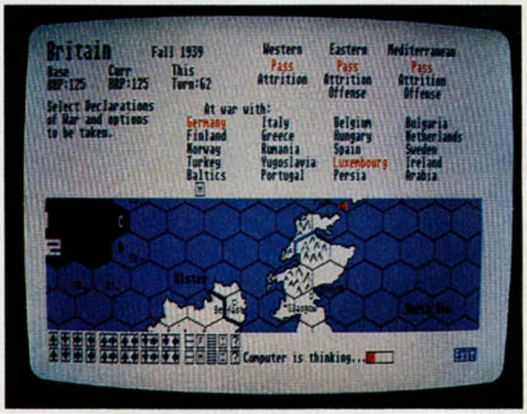
Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" which CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended to provide the "final word" on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is completely finished. Sneak Previews are designed to inform our readers about upcoming games and generate excitement about the "state of the art" of computer game design in general.

by Alan Emrich













There's nothing like a game with a history. *Go*, *Monopoly*, even *Hangman* all have their own unique histories which people have learned about over the years. A few of these games not only *have* a history, they're also *about* history. *Computer Third Reich* from **The Avalon Hill Game Company** is one of those games that has "history" in both senses of the word.

"In the Beginning..."

This history of *Computer Third Reich* (*C3R*) is the history of the 1976 Avalon Hill boardgame, The Rise and Decline of the Third Reich (*3R*). Designed by John Prados and winner of several major hobby/gaming awards, *Third Reich* has withstood the test of time for board wargamers by evolving now into its fourth edition (with an "*Advanced Third Reich*" boardgame expansion kit due out later this year). Like *Computer Diplomacy*, *Computer Acquire* and *Computer Wooden Ships & Iron Men* before it, *Computer Third Reich* is another successful Avalon Hill boardgame translated to the world of PCs. Over its fifteen-year history, *Third Reich* has gathered a dedicated (and extremely hard-core) following of enthusiasts who have long looked forward to a computerization of this, their favorite war-

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game. It should be known that this writer *is* one of those enthusiasts.

The Nature of the Beast

Both incarnations of *Third Reich* cover the land, air and sea warfare in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) during World War II (1939-45). Each game turn represents one season (three months) of real time and the unit scale is roughly corps for the European and American forces, and armies for the Soviets. With the evolution of its various editions, *Third Reich* has become an increasingly detailed (and, of necessity, complex) wargame which is **not** suitable for play by the casual strategist. Nevertheless, the military and economic aspects of strategic level warfare are presented in some depth which will truly challenge (and reward) the players who take the time necessary to master *Third Reich*'s inveterate game systems.

Enter Fighting

The maneuver and combat mechanics for land forces are those of classic hexboard wargaming. Each corps has a symbol to indicate if it is infantry, armor, paratroop, etc. and two numbers indicating (from left to right) the unit's combat strength and movement allowance. Movement occurs by units expending one movement point per land hex entered, and combat occurs by comparing the strengths of all attacking and defending units, reducing these values to a simple odds ratio and rolling the die to get a result. This is all pretty standard stuff, and the computer adds little here that the paper gamer doesn't manage to do just fine on his or her own (right down to rolling the dreaded speckled cube of fate).

The computer does provide advantages, however, when dealing with the more involved "bookkeeping" aspects of *Third Reich*, namely keeping track of air and naval units. Each of these units can only be used once per *game* turn (each side gets a single *player* turn and, when they are both completed, one *game* turn is recorded), so keeping track of which air and naval units have sortied and which are still available is a useful amenity of *Computer Third Reich*. The computer also calculates interceptions and die roll modifiers with the greatest of ease and casualties of war instantly become "allowable builds" which, for a price, can be replaced.

Brother, Can You Spare a BRP?

Third Reich is a game of economics, and the Basic Resource Point (BRP) is its unit of exchange. Each major power has a "force pool" of available units, some of which are placed on the map, others of which can be constructed from the aforementioned "allowable builds." To keep one's war machine running, each major power has an economy measured in BRPs and subject to the whims of war. A base level is determined for each major power (which can grow or shrink due to either savings or losses through strategic warfare) to which is added one's conquests from the previous year. Thus, each Spring turn, for example, Germany will receive its base of 150 BRPs, plus conquests of 20 for Poland, 15 for Belgium, 10 for Norway, etc. This total will be spent throughout the year to purchase offensive options on the three "fronts" on the map, for "declarations of war" against neutral powers and, most importantly, to replace combat losses and maintain forces in the field. Careful economic planning is the cornerstone of success in repeated playings of *Third Reich*.

In summary, *Third Reich* is history and detail. Detailed rules (admittedly made much simpler in the computer version, as the manual only gives the players the basic information and leaves the details to the computer programming) for invasions, armored breakthroughs and exploitation, strategic redeployment, supply, etc. add considerable gravity to the game which are simply not found in such fare as **SSI**'s *Storm Across Europe* or **Microplay**'s *Command HQ*. A newcomer to *Third Reich* is recommended to start with *Computer Third Reich* by this computer game journalist, who agrees with the documentation when it suggests that in order to learn more about the details of the game, one should either purchase *The Gamer's Guide to Third Reich* or the boardgame itself (both published by **Avalon Hill**). *Third Reich* is not an entry-level product into the hobby, and players must keep in mind that its mastery is akin to a doctorate in wargaming.

"The Nazis *are* the enemy. *Wade* into them. Spill *their* blood. Shoot *them* in the belly." —from the opening monologue of the movie *Patton*.

Now, it is time to focus on the differences between the new, computerized version of *Third Reich* and its venerable boardgame ancestor. The quote above suggests that there were only two sides during WWII. This is also the case in *Computer Third Reich*, as the player assumes command of either all Axis or all Allied forces in Europe. In the boardgame version, however, multiplayer options were available and added dimensions of both team play and "every man for himself" when determining victory. The computerized version of the game is suitable only for zero to two players (no modem support is provided, so players must either "hotseat it" at one machine or transfer saved game files).

In both versions of the game, however, there are scenarios for 1939, 1942, 1944 and a campaign game. The campaign game adds elements of strategic warfare to the game, but runs about 24 turns long. Each scenario is about ten turns long and can be finished in a long evening.

Where's the Michelin Guide When You Need One?

The troops in the field maneuvered by the same Michelin road maps which tourists used before the war started. Players of computer wargames often wish they were so lucky. It is almost an intrinsic flaw in computer wargames that only a portion of the map can be closely examined. Computer wargames simply don't offer the ability to "take a step back" from the table and see all the pieces on the board in detail at once. Naturally, this shortcoming also exists in *Computer Third Reich* and, while the programmers thought to offer varying views of the map, players of the board wargame will still be struck by this limitation. It is important to note that computer wargames are not inherently better or worse than their boardgame cousins. They are merely presentations in a different medium, and both paper and electronic versions have their own strengths and weaknesses. Losing the "big picture," however, is one of a computer wargame's greatest shortcomings. (It is interesting to compare the two games in terms of their artwork. For this article, an identical setup of both the board and computer games shows Italy during 1944.)

Getting Technical

Computer Third Reich is based on the fourth edition of the boardgame rules, but players of that game will notice a few key changes to the mechanics of the game which were required to "make it all work" in a computer format. Ground units, for instance, can only move across bodies of water when conducting an in-

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vasion or by Strategic Redeployment (i.e., there are no more "naval transport" missions). Stacking on a beachhead marker is now the same as for every other hex (i.e., only *two* units, instead of six!). In addition to these major changes, one minor one allowing air movement through Swiss air space is also a "feature" of *Computer Third Reich.*

Standing Alone as a Computer Wargame

Computer Third Reich offers some enhancements over the boardgame version. Deployment Limits (i.e., restrictions) can be toggled off, allowing players a "free deployment option" during setup. Although the game is not a graphic wonder (the graphics are utilitarian at best) and there was little to boast about in the sound effects of the beta copy previewed, the real strength of *Computer Third Reich* is, quite simply, its "save game" feature. It is being carefully crafted for ease of use in electronic play-by-mail and will be completely compatible with all release versions of the game (initially Atari ST and C-64, but the IBM and Macintosh formats are *promised*). The hope is to increase its utility for the long-isolated wargaming community at large, something which must be applauded.

Where *Computer Third Reich* really stumbles, however, is not its Spartan audio-visual devices. Instead, it is the artificial intelligence which leaves something to be desired. Against a novice player, the AI will leave that person with more than his hands full (since it is extremely aggressive and the novice player will probably be placed on the defensive from the start). Since many players already have several years experience at the boardgame, however, these grognards will find the maverick style of the computer's gameplay easy to eventually triumph over. It seems, for instance, that an almost standard opening move for the Allies is to declare war on Belgium and Italy on the first turn, while the Russians declare war on Sweden! To say the least, this creates something of a freewheeling situation. The computer does not perform a meticulous factoring of odds as many human *Third Reich* players have trained themselves to do. Thus, the artificial opponent often fails to reveal enough of the strategic and tactical weaknesses of the human player to be able to exploit them. In other words, the computer player would not qualify for the finals of any *Third Reich* Tournament.

Rising From the Post-War Ashes

But programming the algorithms for the AI of a game as complex as *Third Reich* must have been a nightmare, so it is easy to understand this, the game's greatest weakness. Most *Third Reich* players have found human opponents over the years anyway, so the trick now becomes finding one with a copy of *Computer Third Reich* so that saved games can be transferred back and forth. **Thalean Software** (developers of the game) have quite an accomplishment on their hands, even with its flaws. Like *Command HQ*, this wargame is far, far better when human, rather than *artificial*, intelligence is challenged. Apparently, in spite of omnipresent quibbles regarding artificial opponents, *Computer Third Reich* offers a fresh start for **Avalon Hill**'s oft-maligned computer game division. **cgw**

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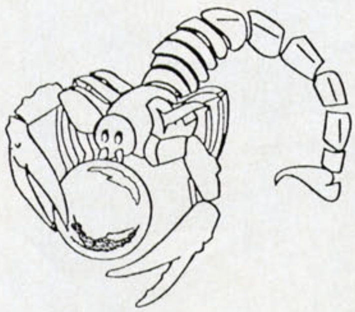
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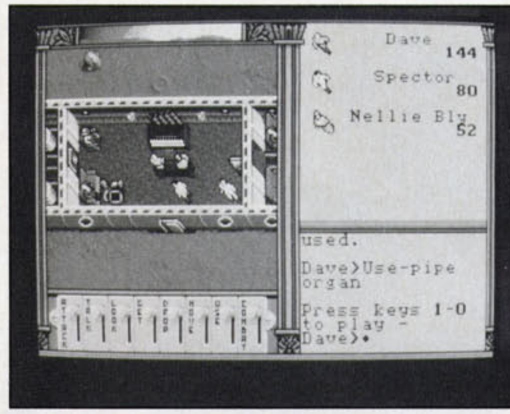
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Scorpion's View



Origin Systems' Martian Dreams



Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to be able to provide this forum for her distinctive and often controversial perspective.

Time to drag out the old crystal ball again. Clink, clink. There we go. Peering into the depths, I see it needs another cleaning again. Sigh. And I just gave it a wipe last week. Wait a minute, the dust is *inside*... and it's red!

Martian Dreams is the second *Worlds of Ultima* game from **Origin**. As you might guess from the title (and the ads), this time around the Avatar visits Mars. Not just any old Mars, but Mars as visualized in old-time science fiction stories. It's something like Jules Verne by way of H.G. Wells, with a Victorian setting.

This is a rescue mission. A prior expedition took off two days early (sabotage is suspected), with a load of historic personages on board, including such notables as Andrew Carnegie, Madame Curie, Thomas Edison, Sarah Bernhardt, Teddy Roosevelt and Rasputin.

They landed safely on Mars, but had no way of getting back. For a while, they communicated with Earth by sun signals from giant reflectors. Now, however, the signals have stopped. So a second expedition is sent out, and the Avatar is on it.

The game starts in mid-flight, with your character being interviewed by none other than Sigmund Freud. How you answer his nosy questions determines the sex of your character and your starting attributes. It's a cute variation on the old gypsy woman with her cards and potions, and fits in well with the time period.

With that taken care of, the capsule lands, and it's time to get to work. The first order of the day is to talk to the other members of the expedition. Nellie Bly (a real person) and Dr. Spector (who isn't) are the only ones who will travel with you. The rest, including Nikola Tesla, Freud, Dr. Blood and the cowboy, will stay in the spaceship.

After you've chatted with all of them and checked out the supply situation, your little party heads off to the landing site of the first expedition. This, along with other prominent features of the Martian landscape, is shown clearly on a paper map that comes with the game.

Here you meet Dibbs, a British soldier. He joins your group and provides some helpful information on where everyone is. In typical human style, the original landing party broke up into smaller groups and went their separate ways. Dibbs, ever the optimist, stayed on alone at the original site waiting for the rescue expedition he figured would come along sooner or later.

Having learned all you can from him, a visit to the trading post run by Buffalo Bill and Calamity Jane is in order. You don't have anything yet to trade for their supplies, but you do hear about a prospector. This is very important.

Martian air is thin, and while you won't suffocate, you don't function as well as usual. In order to breathe properly, you need little rocks called Oxmium. They provide the oxygen your body requires. Old Cooter, the prospector, is the source of most Oxmium, and he's missing. Finding him means finding Oxmium, and you'll do much better if you can breathe right.

After you've managed that chore, you're in good shape for what's to come. Mainly, a *lot* of walking around. This game could easily have been named "Pedestrian Dreams." There are no handy moongates to ease travel. For a long time, the only way to get anywhere is to hoof it. So choose your routes wisely to minimize traveling time whenever possible.

Getting into Olympus should be high on your list of things to do. There is much important information to be learned there, and several of the inhabitants, especially Edison, will be very helpful. However, you have to prove to them first that you aren't crazy.

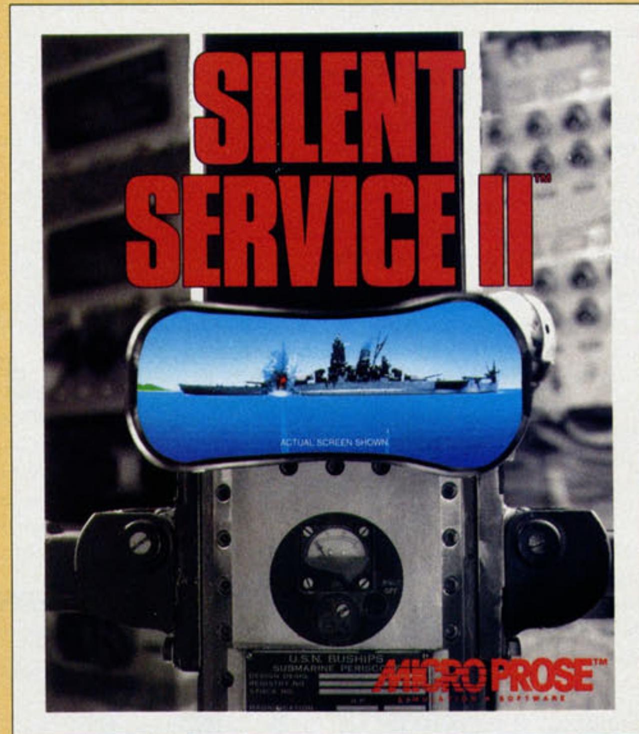
It seems some of the original party started thinking they were Martians, and were kicked out. The folks in Olympus don't want any more nutcases, so you have to have character references. The signatures of the three men out searching for iron ore will do. Their names are Sherman, Yellin and Duprey.

Do those sound familiar? Not only do they sound familiar, these guys look pretty familiar, too. They won't respond to Iolo or Dupre, but do ask Sherman about Shamino some time. Sherman, by the way, will join your party.

Once you can get into Olympus, you start learning about a lot of things pretty quickly; it's a regular gold mine of information. So is Elysium, where the crazy humans hang out. It won't be long before you realize that they *are* out of their

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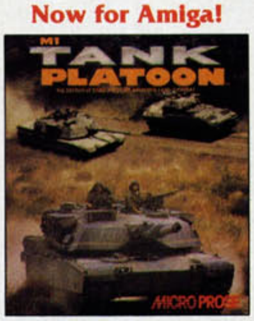


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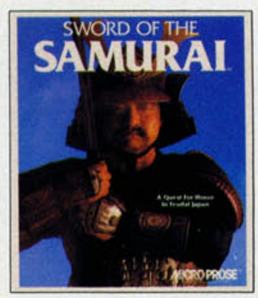
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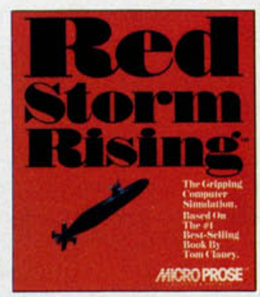


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minds: Martians have taken over the bodies.

What would Mars be without Martians, after all? These denizens have an unhappy history, which you'll discover by talking to them. It's a sad story, although that doesn't make the takeover of humans any more pleasant. Somehow, you're going to have to get the human minds back into the human bodies.

There's a lot of old equipment around that needs to be fixed; you'll have to do something about that, too. This game could easily have been subtitled "How I Spent My Summer Vacation Repairing Martian Machinery." Some of this you can do yourself (with the proper tools), and some will have to be done by others.

It's vital to get the power going again. For one thing, it will allow you to use the transporters to travel between the four cities instantaneously. That certainly beats walking around. Further, some doors are powered by electricity and won't open at all until the juice is flowing.

Melting part of the polar ice cap to fill the canals is also necessary. Barge travel on the canals is the only way to get the iron ore to Carnegie. It's also the only way to get into Argyre, where Rasputin and his followers are holed up. Argyre is the endgame, so you needn't worry too much about filling the canals for quite a while.

That's all I'm going to say about the plot of the game. There's a good story here, and you should find out about it on your own. Watching the tale unfold is half the fun of playing this one.

If you've played *Ultima VI* or *Savage Empire*, you'll find that the interface and engine (as well as the graphics) are pretty much the same as in those games. Inventory is icon-driven, and how much a character can carry is determined by strength. Management of objects is important, as many items are necessary, but which is not always apparent. With limited carrying ability, deciding what to take and what to leave is sometimes difficult. Fortunately, items can be dropped anywhere, and they will still be around when you return.

Party members can be set for individual actions in combat, although I don't recommend giving a shotgun or other wide-range weapon to anyone fighting on his/her own. Other members are likely to be hit. Anyone not in command mode should be outfitted with something less dangerous, such as a rifle, saber or pistol.

Levels are gained during sleep. The avatar carries a tent (big enough for the entire party) that can be used any time. Whenever a character has accumulated enough experience for the next level, he or she will dream while sleeping. Three objects appear (a book, a heart and a sword); whichever one the character "touches" will raise the associated attribute by one point. Which object represents which attribute should be obvious. Sleeping will also restore lost hit points, but possibly not all; it depends on how injured the character is at the time.

The Martian surface seems fairly accurately depicted (except for the canals, of course): endless red sand, with craters, rocks, mountains, hills and ice caps. Unfortunately, the novelty palls after a while, since the landscape is rather much the same wherever you go; there isn't a lot of variety here.



There's a nice Victorian quality about the game, and being able to talk to some of the famous people of the past is fun. The "walking around" tune is very 1890s and doesn't get on your nerves after the first ten minutes. Clothing styles are appropriate to the period. Mars, complete with canals and the ruins of its ancient civilization, is the way people thought it would be in those days.

The big problem with *Martian Dreams* is all the traveling around. There's so much running back and forth, even with the transporters working, that it becomes tedious after awhile. Many locations require multiple visits, especially for repairs, and often the only way to and from these areas is on foot.

Even barge travel is something of a drag. After pushing the navigation lever to the direction you want the barge to go, you have to sit there and keep hitting the space bar. Each hit moves the barge one space, and there is no way to make it move faster. So this method of traveling is no better than going on foot.

At the very least, Origin should consider the **Sierra** style of movement, where the character walks automatically in whatever direction you indicate. It isn't necessary to keep hitting arrow keys, spacebars or mouse buttons continuously. Reducing such actions to the absolute minimum would help relieve some of the monotony, as well as reduce the strain on the hardware.

The truth about *Martian Dreams* is that it's really an adventure game with a thin veneer of CRPG. Combat is mostly gratuitous. While you only get experience for killing things, fighting has little relevance here. Almost all the important activities in the game have nothing to do with fighting. What you come up against aren't evil monsters like orcs and ogres; they're mainly just animals that want you for dinner.

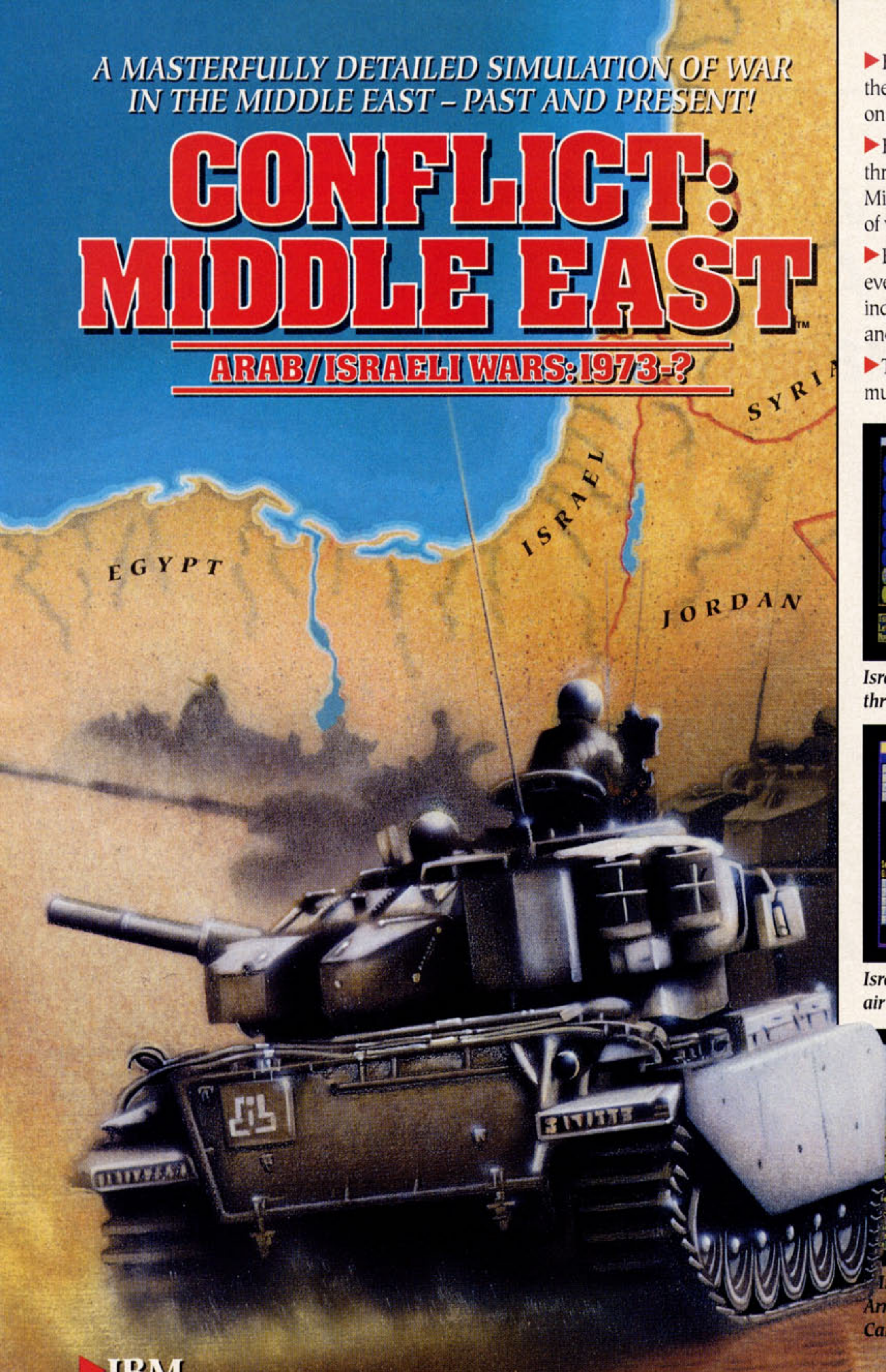
Attributes, therefore, aren't so important. Dexterity allows you to fight better, but as most fighting is superfluous, that doesn't mean much. Strength lets you be more of a packhorse, which is occasionally handy, but not vital. Intelligence is the most important. There are certain berries in the game that confer short-term psychokinetic powers, and a higher intelligence will keep the powers working longer. The Avatar is the best person to use the berries.

That's why *Dreams* is an adventure game. The puzzles you solve, the equipment you repair, almost everything you do, is independent of character stats and level. If there were no creatures to fight, you might almost think you were playing something like *King's Quest*.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. There is much in the game of interest, and certainly plenty to do. It is far better than slogging through many of the CRPGs currently available that have nothing in them except hack'n'slash. However, the combat here is so dissociated from the rest of the story that it sticks out like a sore thumb and is about as welcome.

Overall, *Martian Dreams* will appeal more to those who prefer non-combat activities over battling hordes of endless monsters. Fighting is certainly there if you want it, but that's not what this game is about. Do it in small doses while you work on saving the humans and the Martians.

And so the crystal clouds over again (I'm glad that dust wasn't real). Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**



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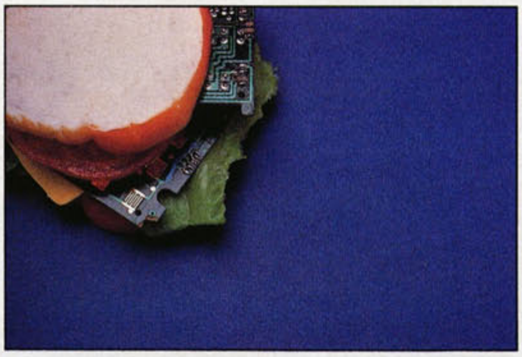


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The Software Industry Changes Shape Again In 1991's Semi-Annual Post-CES Surprise



The software industry was shaken by two major events within mere weeks of the Winter Consumer Electronics Show held in January: the demise of **Cinemaware** as a publisher and the hostile takeover of **Mediagenic**. After the Summer Consumer Electronics Show held in June, no one was expecting a major announcement. Yet, once again, within weeks of the show, a major announcement stunned the industry. **Electronic Arts** had acquired **Distinctive Software, Inc.**

Since **Distinctive** was developing or has developed for a majority of companies in the industry (**Accolade, Broderbund**, **Electronic Arts** and **Konami**), one could almost call the acquisition a preemptive strike on the rest of the industry. In fact, with sources at **Accolade** indicating that **Distinctive** will still be doing product for them (apparently as part of an out-of-court settlement with regard to some legal differences over the proprietary software in the *Test Drive* series) and sources at **Broderbund** indicating that **Distinctive** is attempting to buy back some products on which they have been working for a while, it seems clear that the **Electronic Arts** acquisition will cause some major ripples in the industry.

From the **Electronic Arts** perspective, however, this acquisition is simply part of the overarching company strategy. According to **EA** Vice-President Bing Gordon, "Part of **EA**'s strategy is to take the early videogame profits and reinvest them in anticipation of 1993 profits." Actually, **EA** was considering the acquisition of a publisher in the entertainment software field, but after realizing the quality of work that **Distinctive** was performing on *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge*, the **EA** board of directors decided to formalize the relationship between the Canadian developer and the San Mateo-based publisher. Both publisher and developer feel that their track records are mutually solid and amenable to the type of work each company performs best. In fact, the deal was allegedly closed in near-record time, a matter of weeks.



The Terminator

As part of the terms of the acquisition, **DSI** president Don Mattrick will come on board as vice-president of strategic planning. He will be working with long-term **EA** brain trust member Bing Gordon in this area. Indeed, **Electronic Arts** executives are ef-

fusive in using phrases like "increasing our creative capacity" to describe the acquisition. As Gordon told *CGW*: "Every time in the past that we have brought people into the company who have done successful work elsewhere, it has brought new creative energy into our in-house product development. It's a good business decision, but I'm most excited about the potential for raising the creativity level of each team [**EA**'s in-house design teams and **Distinctive**'s out-of-house team]."

What this means to consumers is that there will continue to be a major flow of products from **Electronic Arts**. The synergy between the two companies should benefit **EA**'s products in the long run, since **Distinctive** had already invested a significant amount of capital in new technology. This is unusual for a developer, but means that both companies are anxious to get together to talk over issues of technology and design with their respective teams. It also means that **Electronic Arts** may bring to market some products that the developer was doing independently of other publishers. Most anxiously awaited, of course, is the *Sports Simulation* line of 3-D sports games (originally scheduled to be produced for **Broderbund**). Yet **DSI** is working on products in genres they have not yet published in. The logistics of integrating **DSI** into the parent company will present an interesting transition period, since **EA** will actually be able to start considerably more projects in the next year to eighteen months than they would have without the acquisition.

Graphically Portrayed (Adventure)

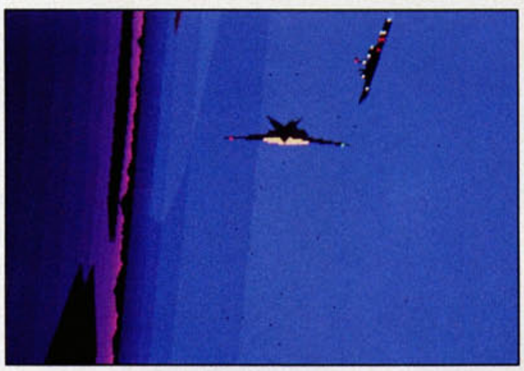
Adventure game products continue to be one of the major arenas in entertainment software publishing. Movies, murder and mayhem might be appropriate categories for this year's crop. **Bethesda Softworks** has licensed the eponymous protagonist of the movie for *The Terminator*. Actually, *The Terminator* features several variations on a theme. It can be played as primarily a role-playing adventure if the player opts to portray Reese or, conversely, as essentially an arcade adventure should the player opt to take on the persona of the movie's dominant force. The game features two modes (real and practice) of difficulty, as well as an option to toggle between a long game (where the character begins with, simply, the clothes



Legends of Robin Hood

on his back) or a short game (where the player is partially equipped). It features action sequences in real time which take place on a tactical scale and strategic decision-making on a map of the city. Character development strictly consists of improving one's skills and, in the case of the movie's namesake, system functions. Another interesting option is the capacity to play a direct connect version of the game using a null modem.

Bethesda notes that the game is nonlinear and involves plenty of explora-

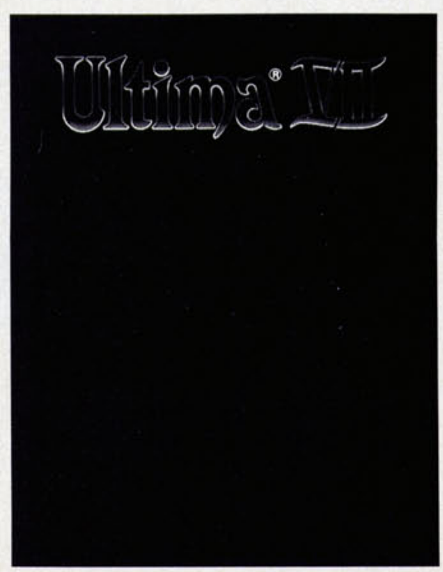


F-117A

tion for adventurers. Puzzles are reality-based rather than depending on the designer's imagination to come up with the kinds of bizarre solutions found in some adventure games. With all of this going for it, however, one can very well see that some graphics-oriented gamers will be extremely disoriented by the largely EGA game with a focused VGA wrap.

Another movie game is based on a film character who no longer graces the silver screen. **Lucasfilm Games** is readying a new graphic adventure based on their parent company's valuable character, called *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. Besides having a great storyline being serialized by **Dark Horse Comics**, the game features a bold and exciting new design feature. Players can opt (by the way, they solve a problem early in the game) to take basically an action track, a puzzle-solving approach or a verbal (using dialogue) approach to advancing the game In the new Indiana Jones game, there is even a sequence on the submarine where the player will have to "earn" the interface by discovering what all the controls mean.

Even in keeping up with the "Quest" tradition, **Sierra** managed to turn to the movies for inspiration. *Conquests of the Longbow: Legends of Robin Hood* (or should that be *Conquests of the Longbow*?) is to Robin Hood what Christy Marks' *Conquests of Camelot* was to the Arthurian tradition. In addition, **Sierra** has tapped the composer of the *Miami Vice* theme song to orchestrate the third release in the *Police Quest* series. *Police Quest III: The*



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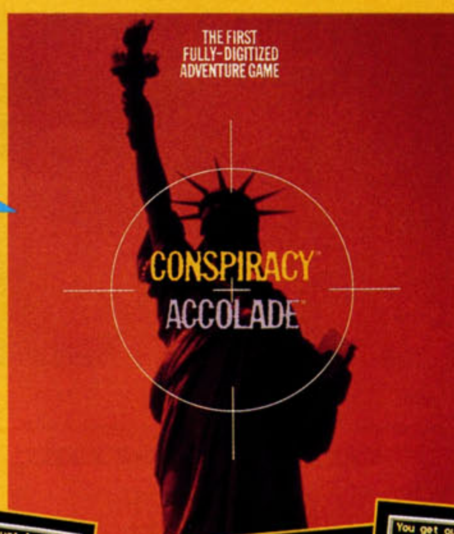




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Actual game screens from IBM PC/VGA version of the game. Other versions may vary.

Kindred is, perhaps, the most cinematic of all the graphic adventures released by **Sierra** to this date. The scriptwriter has done a fascinating job of using quick cuts and long-range establishing shots (along with the rotoscoping of images captured from live actors) to portray the dark underworld of the *Police Quest* milieu.

Naturally, there are plenty of computer games that deal with death. In addition to *Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective* and *J. B. Harold: Murder Club* on the **Turbo-Grafx 16** (discussed in *CGW* #85), **U.S. Gold** is releasing *Murder*. The game features a notebook feature reminiscent of **Accolade**'s earlier *Killed Until Dead* game. Players glean information from a simulated front page of a newspaper and have up to two hours of real time to solve the mystery. The company claims that there are three million permutations to the game, so there is (practically speaking) near infinite replayability.

Newspapers also play a vital role in an educational adventure game due out as this issue hits the stands. **Davidson** is releasing a learning adventure called *Headline Harry and the Great Paper Race*. As one can quickly guess, the player takes on the role of a reporter who is chasing down various leads on a major story out of history or current events. There are always four difficulty levels for the player to choose from and three possible stories to "write" by gleaning the correct geographical, historical and informational data, but only one of the three stories is actually correct. Like *Murder* and *Magic Candle II*, the game features a built-in notebook feature. If, then, "Harry" can get the right information into his notebook in five different games (all of which can be printed out on his parents' printer), the player receives the honor of having the "Story of the Year." In the case of a player's victory, there is also an option to print out a nice award certificate.

Sequels also continue to feed the adventure game market. In addition to the two **Sierra** sequels noted above, the company is unveiling the fourth game in the *Leisure Suit Larry* series — *Leisure Suit Larry 5: Passionate Patty Does A Little Undercover Work*. It *is* only the fourth game, but the new sounds and graphics added to the original *Leisure Suit Larry* may force that game to be counted as number four (at least, by **Sierra**'s own sequel police, introduced in *Space Quest IV*!).

Accolade's *Les Manley: Lost in L.A.* not only features the fancy graphics techniques described last issue, but it also features a snazzy little story where Les wanders about Southern California looking for enough clues to locate the kidnappers of Helmut, the world's smallest man (as seen in *Search for the King*). Production values are much enhanced over the earlier version.

Lucasfilm's *The Secret of Monkey Island II* is subtitled *LeChuck's Revenge*. Ron Gilbert continues to simplify his classic interface and this game features icons to suggest the items in one's inventory and the option of choosing from three different levels of puzzle difficulty. The set-up

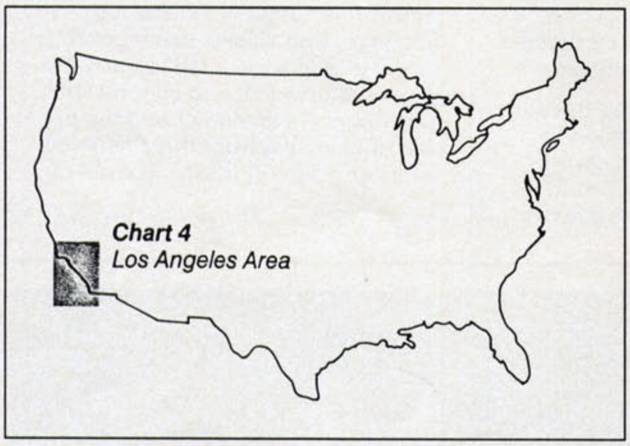
(Continued on page 37)

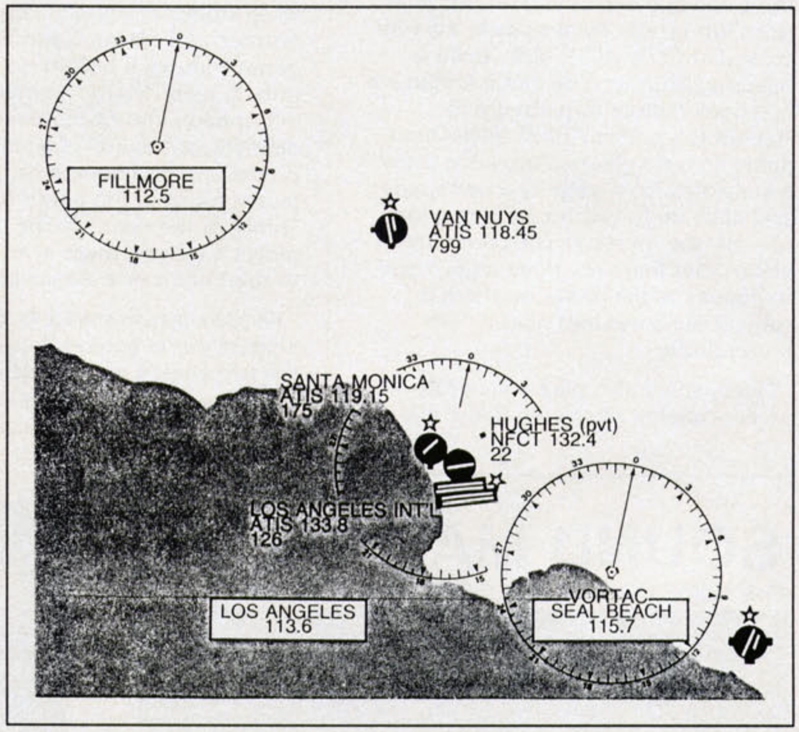
From the Cockpit

Response to our special issue on flight simulations was so outstanding that we have added a new bimonthly column. In "From the Cockpit," Timothy Trimble will tell our readers about new flight simulator products and suggest new experiments to try with some older products. As its maiden flight, "From the Cockpit" will cover...

Shooting an ILS Approach with Microsoft Flight Simulator 4

by Timothy Trimble



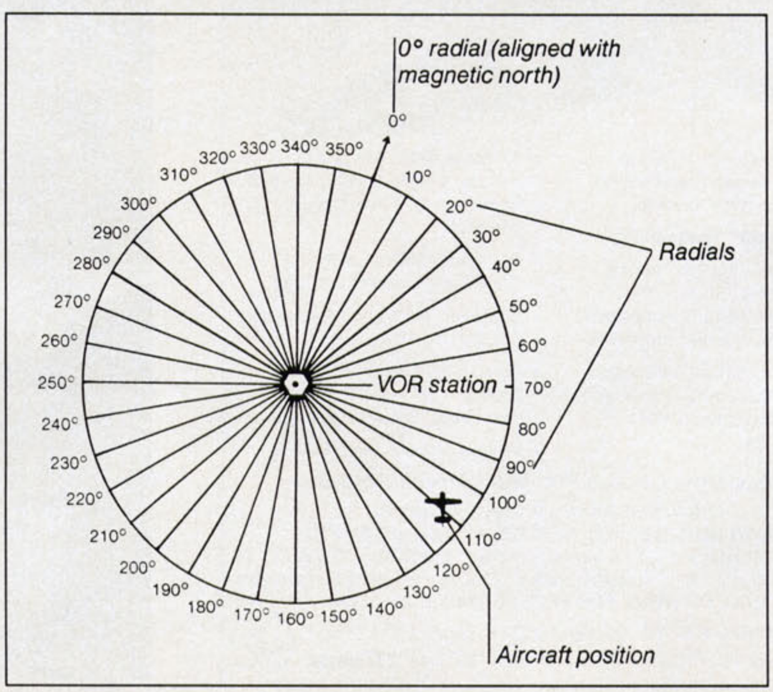


Uh, Cessna 374, you are cleared for ILS approach to runway one six left. Localizer is 111.30, squak ident 2437, and report on outer beacon.

Actually, most armchair pilots, being quite comfortable with their simulated flights in *Flight Simulator 4*, would have a difficult time digesting this type of information. While *FS* is known for its great graphics and scenery, there is much, much more to offer to those who are willing to take a shot at using the cockpit instruments. For example, how many armchair pilots can say that they know how to fly from LAX (Los Angeles International) into a thick cloud cover 1500 feet off the ground and fly strictly via instruments to VNY (Van Nuys) for an ILS (Instrument Landing System) approach? Be honest now!

Actually, the secrets of ILS and instrument flight are not really that much of a mystery. There are two types of flight rules that pilots fly by: VFR — Visual Flight Rules, and IFR — Instrument Flight Rules. The first is how most *FS* pilots like

(Continued on page 38)



Post-CES Surprise

(Continued from page 35)

for the story line is absolutely hilarious, so one would expect similar chuckles to those in the original adventure.

Finally, Kellyn Beck is preparing to offer yet another adventure game perspective through **Electronic Arts**. Kellyn's project is called *Earthling*. It is a hybrid action/adventure in which the player fights tactical space battles in order to have his cosmic Robin Hood survive. The game's population includes six rather unique races of aliens and Kellyn promises some unique approaches to graphics.

Perceptions of Reality (Simulations)

In keeping with tradition, **MicroProse** continues to strengthen their product line by expanding the scope of their classic simulation products and enhancing the sights and sounds of simulated combat with state-of-the-art techniques. This year, *F-117A* takes off (pardon the pun) where the award-winning *F-19 Stealth Fighter* left off. Players will have the option of playing the game as if it were little more than an enhanced VGA version of the earlier game *or* can simulate some of the more realistic aspects of the F-117A that have been learned since the release of the earlier game. Now, pilots can face the enemy in nine theaters of war (all of the *F-19 Stealth Fighter* and *F-15 Strike Eagle II* theaters, plus Cuba, Colombia and Iraq). In addition, the game features a *Harpoon*-style database with great graphics and extremely effective portrayals of night missions. In fact, most of the game is concerned with night missions, since that is actually the time when most effective use of the stealth technology can be made.

We were also favorably impressed by the capacity to access the entire three-dimensional world in the viewscreen. In earlier products, one did not have access to this kind of detail. Further, all computer gamers who hated the pure polygon renderings of smoke will be pleased to note that smoke in *F-177A* is now sprite-driven. Another fascinating detail was the night-lit fields. The lights on the landing strip are timed according to the game clock and the clock is always running.

Gunship 2000 is, as noted in the Winter CES report (*CGW* #81, p. 43), a complete remake of the earlier product, emphasizing squadron action and featuring mission-driven action in either European or Middle Eastern theaters of war.

In addition, the company's European development group has finished work on *Elite Plus* for the **Microplay** label. This is an update of a space combat/trading game from the early '80s which used three-dimensional wireframe graphics. Even so, many people continue to point to the original *Elite* and ask why no one is doing a state-of-the-art version. Now someone has.

The **Microplay** line-up also includes a flight simulation product with an ad-

(Continued on page 115)

From the Cockpit

(Continued from page 36)

to fly, by looking at the scenery, roads, etc. IFR requires that a pilot fly the aircraft *without* looking out the windows.

One of the main instruments in the cockpit for IFR flight is the VOR indicator. A VOR is a Very high frequency Omnidirectional Range or, in simple terms, a transmitter on the ground that sends out signals that indicate magnetic course in degrees (such as 360 degrees for North and 180 degrees for South). The DME (Distance Measuring Equipment) is also quite helpful for IFR flight. The DME will show distance to the selected VOR transmitter. If this is still confusing, do not worry. It will become a lot clearer once we start the flight.

To show just how simple this can be, let's load up *Flight Simulator 4* and prepare for an instrument flight. Here are the settings that should be used:

Position: North — 15377.014
East — 5807.7698
Altitude — 134
Heading — 250

Since this is an IFR flight it would be appropriate to have some weather. Set the cloud bottoms at 1500 feet and the tops at 8000 feet. This will place you on the end of runway 25 at LAX (Los Angeles International). To keep from getting super busy in the air it is best to set up the instruments before departure. These settings are:

Com	133.80
Nav1	113.1
Nav2	112.5
VOR1	160 degrees
VOR2	320 degrees.

Now we are ready for departure.

Flight 182, you are cleared for departure on runway 25 right. Apply full throttle and pull back on the yoke at 55 knots. Raise the gear, drop the throttle one notch and enjoy the climb. At 1500 feet, the plane enters the clouds and one is no longer able to see out the windows.

Flight 182, climb to 6000. At 6000 feet, throttle back to about 70 percent power and drop the nose for level flight. Keep the heading of 250 degrees.

Flight 182, turn right to 320 degrees, maintain current altitude. Keep an eye on the VOR2 instrument. When the needle starts moving from the left, this indicates that the plane is nearing the turning point. When the needle is just to the left of the small circle, it is time to begin the right turn. At 310 degrees, one should start to level the turn and should be completely done with the turn at 320 degrees. The VOR2 needle should now be in the center of the dial. Set the DME to VOR2 (Press B). This means that the plane is currently headed toward the Fillmore VOR transmitter. This is the easy part of the flight, so just cruise and wait to arrive at the VOR.

Flight 182, turn right at Fillmore to 52 degrees, descend to 5000. About 5 miles from the Fillmore VOR, the needle on VOR2 will start to shift to one side. Just keep the current heading without following the needle. As soon as the plane passes over the VOR, the VOR instrument will switch from "To" to "Off" and then to "From," showing that the plane is now flying away from the Fillmore VOR transmitter. At this point make a right-hand turn to 52 degrees. Once the plane is level, descend to 5000 feet. Switch the DME to VOR1. This will now show the distance to the VNY (Van Nuys) VOR. It is vital for a pilot to keep his/her eyes on the VOR1 instrument during this phase.

Flight 182, intercept the VNY VOR at 160 degrees and begin descent to Van Nuys. When the VOR1 needle is just left of the small circle, make a right hand turn to 160 degrees. When coming out of the turn, the needle should be in the center. Now switch the Nav1 radio to 111.3. This sets the VOR1 instrument to the ILS approach system at Van Nuys. Reduce the throttle to about 50 percent. Both the horizontal and vertical needles are now active in the VOR1 instrument. If the vertical needle is to the *left* of center, this means the plane is to the right of the runway. If the horizontal needle is *below* the center, this means the plane is above the proper glide path to the runway (in other words, you're too high). This is where it gets busy. Make the appropriate adjustments to the airplane to keep bothneedles in the center of VOR1. If the plane still needs to descend faster, reduce the throttle a few more notches. To slow the descent, increase the throttle slightly.

Flight 182, you are cleared for ILS approach to Van Nuys runway 16 Right. Contact tower on outer marker. At about eight miles from the airport, one hears a beeper go off and the O light on the marker lights will be lit. This lets pilots know that they are eight miles out from the airport and on the right course. As the plane passes through 3500 feet, apply two notches of flaps. At 2000 feet, drop the landing gear and another two notches of flaps. Keep the needles centered in VOR1. At 1500 feet, the plane should break free of the clouds and have the runway just ahead.

Flight 182, you are cleared for landing on runway 16 Right. For the rest of the trip, it should be possible to rely on the view out the cockpit window for the landing. Then, once the plane is safe and secure on the runway, it is time to wipe that "simulated" sweat off one's hands.

Once a pilot gets to the point where this becomes too easy, it is possible to throw in some winds and thunderstorms to change the entire perspective. Another nice change is to do this flight at night. It is extremely pleasing to see the approach lights of the airport after breaking out of the clouds.

Once a pilot becomes sufficiently proficient at ILS approaches, it is simply a matter of pulling over to the CompuServe "hangar" and swapping stories with one's fellow armchair pilots. Don't forget to tell them about that "hairy" approach to Van Nuys.

Until we have clearance to take off once again in the clear blue skies of *Computer Gaming World*, this is Timothy Trimble...From the Cockpit! **cgw**

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Circle Reader Service #63

Top Ad Winners Announced!





Last January we ran our annual Top Ad contest, in which we invited our readers to vote on the best ads in the magazine. The results are in and **Strategic Simulations Inc.** takes top honors in the full-page cate-gory with their ad "Eye of the Beholder." The top fractional ad (less than a full page in size) was California Dreams' ad "Kiss Your Asteroid Goodbye."

The win by the "Eye of the Beholder" ad just goes to show that even professionals can't always predict what will appeal to readers. The artwork for **SSI**'s *Eye of the Beholder* game was rejected by *CGW*'s Publisher as a potential front-cover illustration. He felt that, while dramatic, the undead creature in the artwork would have a negative impact on all but AD&Ders. Looks like he blew it. The ad (using the same art) far outdistanced its nearest competitor in the scoring.

Second place in the full-page category went to **Origin** for their *Wing Commander* ad. The ad did a good job of showing what graphic displays in the game were like (sort of). Actually, we gave **Origin** a bit of a bad time about the phrase "What you *see* is what you play" since a number of graphic images in the ad did not make it into the final game. Nevertheless, the ad accurately communicates the high-energy nature of gameplay.

Third place in the full-page category went to **Virgin Mastertronic** for their *Overlord* ad: dark, ominous, but with a lot of screen shots.

In the fractional category it is quite obvious that four-color is the key. All the four-color fractional ads scored highly, with California Dreams taking the first and third spots with their "Kiss Your Asteroid Goodbye" (*Tunnels of Armageddon*) and "Hit The Road, Daddy-O" (*Street Rod*) ads. Second place went to **Interplay** for their "Develop an Appreciation for the Classics" ad which promoted four of their past "classic" titles.

The reader who came closest to picking the winners receives $250 cash and a lifetime subscription to *CGW*. That reader is Bill Price of Tallahassee, FL. Congratulations, Bill.

Advertisers: get ready for the January 1992 Top Ad contest. *CGW* readers prove year in and year out that they are the cream of the crop when it comes to being computer game consumers.

Readers: Remember, all that money the advertisers spend is for the sole purpose of reaching you and showcasing their products to you. You're really kind of powerful when you stop and think about it. After all the money is spent, and the work is done, it is your decision to make. I guess that gives you the right to say: go ahead, advertiser, make my day! CGW

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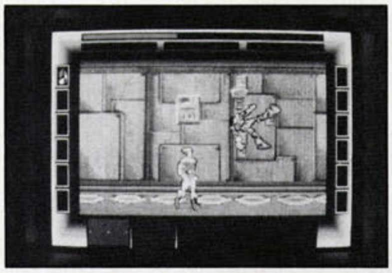
Circle Reader Service #53

Oh, Sega, Can You See?

Symtus' Cybergenic Ranger — *An IBM Game in Sega's Clothing*

by Charles Ardai

TITLE:	Cybergenic Ranger
SYSTEM:	IBM
COPY PROTECT:	Document Look-Up
PRICE:	$49.95
PUBLISHER:	Symtus Palacios, TX



Like comic books, sci-fi movies and Rodney Dangerfield, video games get no respect. "They're just for kids," insist detractors, "and bad for them to boot." Some computer gamers say that "they are to sophisticated computer games what a Quarter Pounder with cheese is to a filet mignon." Even video gamers complain that video games are often cookie-cutter products, all too often rehashing old, tired ideas for a quick buck. To these criticisms, there is only one suitable response for the lover of video games to deliver: a rousing Bronx cheer.

Some of us *like* to eat at McDonald's (at least some of the time) and while an exclusive diet of fast food would not be very healthy, the occasional indulgence never hurt anyone. Playing video games never hurt anyone either. As for the third (and most valid) complaint, that too many video games are retreads of their predecessors, one can regret the general trend toward self-imitation while still enjoying an old idea re-done with style, vigor and panache.

This is a good description of *Cybergenic Ranger*. In its first ever entertainment product, **Symtus** has combined elements from several recent and classic arcade favorites, presenting them elegantly with state-of-the-art graphic and sound techniques. The game's action is fast, varied, plentiful and nicely accented by fillips of all sorts: ghastly RealSound death gurgles, colorful explosions, fanfares on the soundtrack and so forth. The game is also packed with the sort of hidden secrets, bonuses and "Easter eggs" that home gamers have enjoyed ferreting out since the days of Atari VCS *Adventure* (and which, more recently, have spawned an entire industry of "tip" books for Nintendo games). The storyline and action are derivative, but so what? The game is fun, and that is what matters.

To those who would automatically greet a game such as *Cybergenic Ranger* with a sneer, one might humbly suggest that they play it before judging it. Few players will be able to fight the lava monsters of Chrystillia without feeling their fingers start to twitch against the fire button, or battle the Tasmanian Devil-like whirling dervish of Protite without cracking a smile. This reviewer couldn't — and it isn't every game that leaves him twitching and smiling.

The Lone Ranger

As should be obvious from the above description, *Cybergenic Ranger* owes a good deal to comic books and sci-fi movies (though it owes nothing to Rodney Dangerfield). It also owes a lot to cartoons, to literary science fiction and to the Sega Genesis school of video game design — Sega rather than Nintendo because the game is more *Altered Beast* than it is *Super Mario Brothers*.



The story, which is nicely presented in the manual as a twelve-page comic book very much in the style of the old *Atari Force* inserts that came with some VCS games, tells of a scientist couple on a mining planet coming up against two threats: AI-endowed robots turning against their creators, and the Regenerates, a race of cyborgs invading our universe through a "pseudospace" rift. The premise pays homage to such classic sf stories as Isaac Asimov's "Little Lost Robot" and Philip K. Dick's "Second Variety," while the threat of self-regenerating 'borgs comes right out of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

Next comes a tip of the hat to Superman: as danger threatens the lives of the two scientists, they put their infant son, Micah, in a space capsule and eject him to safety. It should surprise no one that the boy grows up to be superpowered, though in this version of the myth it is because, to save his life, the doctors had to turn Micah into a cyborg himself. (Shades of *The Six Million Dollar Man*... allusion hunters, take note.)

When he reaches maturity, Micah resolves to travel to the wreckage of his father's spaceship and track down the twelve technology-filled pods his dad scattered around the cosmos just before falling prey to the Regenerates. One of these pods accompanied Micah to safety, so the player starts the game with its contents; each of the remaining pods gives the player a new weapon or device when the player manages to find it.

(One deserted spaceship plus seven planets, with the last planet having three levels, equals ten pods; plus the pod Micah starts with equals eleven... quick arithmetic should tell players not to expect to get the twelfth pod in the game. Sure enough, one doesn't. The game ends with promise of a sequel; in fact, Symtus is planning at least two.) Micah's first stop, the wreckage of the *Startreader*, reveals a scene straight out of *Aliens*: dead bodies drifting in zero-G and ship's robots fighting to protect a crew already long past protecting. There's not much conflict in this scene, though contact with the corpses is energy-draining and those robots do put up a fight. The designers build up to the game's real dangers gradually, giving players a chance in this first scene to get used to the mechanics of controlling Micah. The controls are actually quite simple — cursor keys or joystick for movement and a different button for each device Micah acquires — but the gentle build-up is welcome, as well as making sense in terms of the story.

The second stop is the moon of Denges, where the player gets more target practice and Micah gets his first nifty weapon, a salt shooter. Yes, a salt shooter — perhaps intended for use against giant slugs. Next, it's off to Antrymite, an ice planet in the tradition of Hoth. It is here that the real fighting begins.

From this point on, the action never lets up, even spilling over into the spaceflight between planets. Micah fights giant horseflies on Promuta; a giant viper on Pyrobus; the aforementioned lava beasts; and robots, robots, robots on the three levels of Artica.

Each enemy has different strengths and weaknesses, as well as different modes of attack. For instance, the Ultrameks shoot their hands at Micah, the way the Shogun Warrior dolls of the 1970s used to. Half the fun of *Cybergenic Ranger* is figuring out a strategy to defeat each of the various beasties. Once one has figured out the proper moves to dispose of a foe, performing them over and over again is more of an endurance test than a challenge. Still, there are enough different foes that there is always something to look forward to around the corner.

If planning combat strategies is only half the fun, the other half has to be enjoying the game's imaginative and detailed visuals — in fact, this accounts for more than half the fun. The backgrounds get better and better from planet to planet, with parallax scrolling creating a limited sense of depth and environmental details (lightning, rain, landscape) affecting the gameplay.

Moving about in front of these backdrops, the various characters are large, colorful and well-drawn. Micah is cut from the typical Space Opera Hero mold while the monsters would not look out of place either in a Roger Corman low-budget quickie or in a Saturday morning cartoon. This is quite an accomplishment. More than most games that try to do so, *Cybergenic Ranger* captures a comic book atmosphere. The serviceable but forgettable soundtrack does its bit, too: like MSG on Chinese food, it is of dubious value on its own, but it highlights everything it touches.

The result is a video game clearly programmed by people who love this sort of game, for people who love this sort of game. The genuine affection for the genre shows at all times, and the designers' enthusiasm for their project is infectious. The player gets caught up in their silly and wonderful flight of fancy and is taken for quite a ride.

Of course, people who don't enjoy video games will not be converted by this one. People who *do* like video games, however, and who have a hard time finding good ones for MS-DOS systems, will be well rewarded by picking up *Cybergenic Ranger.*

Cybergunk

The only problem with the game is that there are things in it that don't quite make sense. The problem is not the plot; the plot isn't supposed to make sense. What kind of sense can there be in giant human hearts flying overhead or sentient patches of fire scurrying about underfoot?

No, the problematic lack of sense is on another level entirely. For instance, on the level of controls: the basic control system is simple enough, but as each new ability is added to Micah's repertoire, the player has to keep in mind an increasing number of control keys. This is acceptable, though wearying — one finds oneself in tight spots unsure whether * controls the salt shooter, the bombs or the missiles, and the on-screen graphics are not always too helpful.

More irritating, however, is the fact that the keys one has to use are spread out all over the keyboard. By the endgame, one has to dash among the cursor keys, the space bar, Enter, *, +, -, /, and the tilde (~), which controls the dreaded "Shard of Symtus." Why didn't the designers pick keys that were closer together, or

use the letter that starts a device's name (e.g., "B" for bomb) to activate that device? It doesn't make sense.

If that's not enough, there are also the function keys to deal with. Mostly, these are for administrative chores (save, restore, exit), but F5 is an exception. F5 lets Micah talk to other characters. This is a wonderful addition to an action game, with real potential to open up the world of the fiction. The problem is that, except in one crucial instance, the only characters to talk to are the monsters one is fighting, and monsters rarely have much to say. Mostly, their remarks are dopey puns, such as when the flying hearts say "Be my Valentine," or when the hand-shooting Ultrameks say, "I've got to hand it to you."

One wonders why the Talk command was included, if it was only to be used once in the entire game. (This reviewer only found a single encounter where it was useful, in any event.) If it was needed for this encounter, why didn't the designers then go back and put in additional uses for it elsewhere? Again, it doesn't make sense.

Then, too, there is the question of how successful *Cybergenic Ranger* is at imitating its models, home and arcade video games. Hampered by the limitations of the IBM PC, the game is flatter, smaller and shorter than its equivalents on dedicated video game systems. Even this way, one has to have a high-density drive for installation, a hard drive with six megabytes of free memory to play from, a VGA card to get good graphics (the EGA graphics are weak) and a sound card to get more than beeps and boops out of the soundtrack. The RealSound effects will come through without a card, of course, but these are trivial: gunshots, screams, explosions, brief nuggets of speech.

Trying to create a Sega-style game for the IBM is a little like trying to cram a pig into knee breeches: there's no good way to do it, and nothing one does will result in a good fit. Symtus has done a remarkable job, but it has still ended up with a pig in knee breeches. MS-DOS gamers may not find anything better to satisfy their arcade hunger, but they could still be disappointed by what they get.

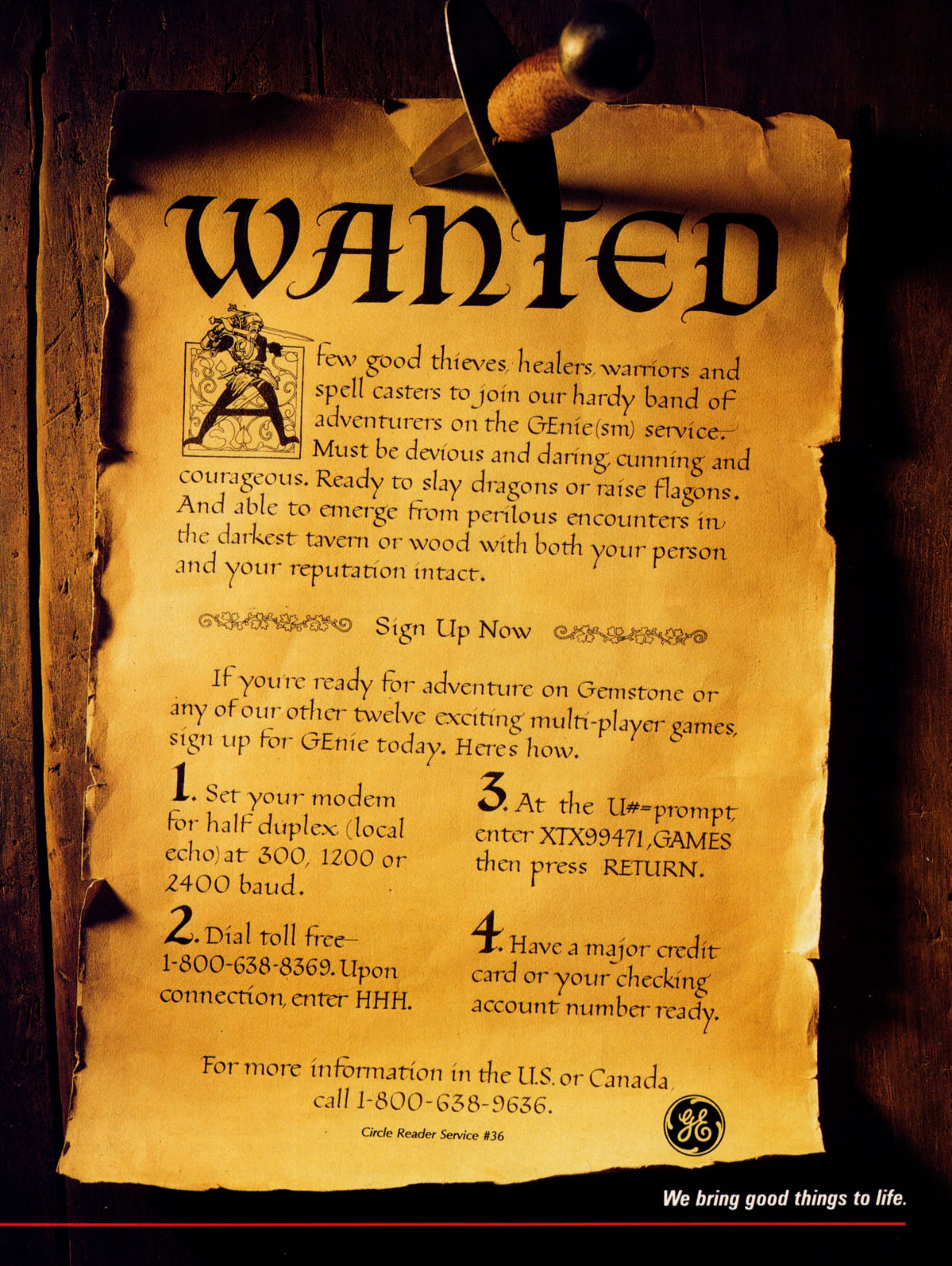
Why? Because *Cybergenic Ranger* has flat landscapes on top of which the events are superimposed (there's no illusion of moving *in* the worlds, only of moving on game screens); because the worlds are not as extensive as one would like (one hits the edges fairly quickly); and because, with the exception of the jet boots Micah finds on Atrymite, the various gadgets the player uncovers are weapons that are hard to distinguish from one another.

The game's role-playing element is barely developed. What one is actually supposed to do in the spaceflight sequences is never entirely clear. So, when all is said and done, *Cybergenic Ranger* basically amounts to a handful of two-dimensional combat scenes. Don't misunderstand — the scenes are lots of fun. Compared to a good Sega game, though, *Cybergenic Ranger* sometimes has a second-rate feel.

Hits and Missiles

There is no game without flaws, of course. To say that *Cybergenic Ranger* is flawed is just to say that one wishes it would be better. It is less flawed than many games and certainly less flawed than most of the pure action games available for the IBM.

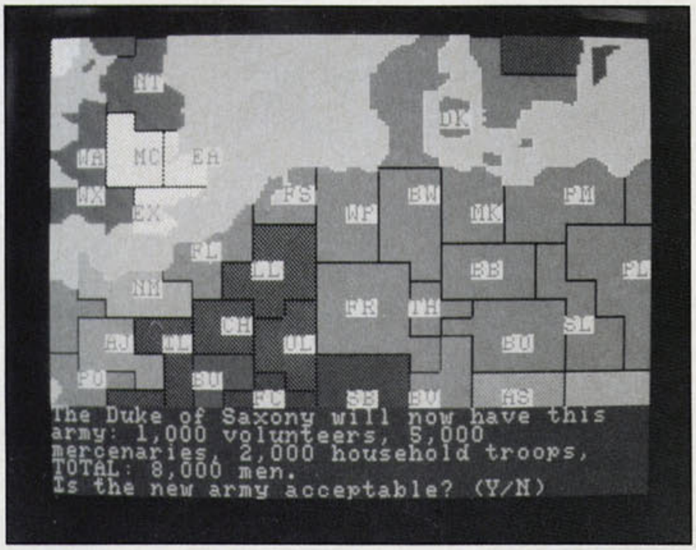
A true arcade buff may prefer to spend his fifty bucks on two hundred games of *Golden Axe* or a hundred each of *Smash TV* and *Pit Fighter* — or put it toward the purchase of a Genesis system. The dedicated MS-DOS gamer who wants a solid action fix, however, will not find it easy to do better than to put his money down on Symtus' imperfect but delightful tour-de-force. **cgw**


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Avoiding Feudal Attempts at European Hegemony

Clarion Calls to Master SSI's Medieval Lords

by Tom E. Hughes, Jr.



Before one marches wildly off on some fool idealistic crusade, it is always good to know the odds. In **SSI**'s *Medieval Lords* (reviewed in *CGW* #85, page 52), it can be futile (feudal?) not to know the odds. The present writer would like to offer a special thanks to designer Martin Campion for sharing some insight into the actual formulae and logic used by the computer in determining the fate of the "empires" that belong to these *Medieval Lords*.

Before the Age of Science

This article presents several exact formulae used by the *Medieval Lords* program. The following abbreviations have been used to present these formulae:

Bs	= Bureaucracy strength
Ns	= Nobility strength
Nl	= Nobility's loyalty
Ts	= Town strength
Pop	= Population of province concerned
Castles	= Number of castles in province concerned
Dist	= Distance from army's location to province concerned
DF	= Distance Factor (see paragraph below)
Rule	= Leader's Rulership value
Warlike	= Leader's Warlikeness value
Char	= Leader's Charisma value
Gen	= Leader's Generalship value
Rand(#)	= Random number from zero to #

Many formulae include an "distance factor" element which reads "DF." More exactly, that formula is: "Distance x (19 - current century *[which ranges from 11 to 16]*) / 2." The bottom-line effect of this is that one must determine whether it is possible to move the army easily to the province concerned (i.e., if it is not over a body of water). If so, **move it there first**, *then* perform the desired action (this "distance factor" always lessens one's chance for success). Remember, moving (except across bodies of water) is a "free" action, and the upshot of this formula element is to emphasize that success is more readily obtained if the ruler is present "in person" rather than at a distance.

Elements in [brackets] are explained in the line below the formula. When a Leader is off on a crusade, his default ratings are all "3s" when it comes to domestic actions.

Ruling the Roost

When supporting cities, the key elements are the Leader's Rulership rating and the distance from the Leader to the province being supported. Here are the formulae for the percentage chance of increasing the strength and loyalty of one's towns and *decreasing* the strength and loyalty of the local nobility *by one* by performing the **Support Town** action:

Increasing Town Strength
Rule x 11 - DF + Bs [- (Ts - 2) x 3]
[only applies if Ts > 2]

Increasing Town Loyalty
Char x 13 - DF [+ 5] {-5}
[if province is claimed]
{if the Leader is of a different religion than province concerned}

Decreasing Noble Strength
(Ns - Ts) x 10

Decreasing Noble Loyalty
Ts x 12 + DF [- Char x 5] {+5}
[or 15 if Leader is absent (off "Crusading")]
{if province not claimed by Leader}

Hence, once Town Strength rises above two, it becomes more difficult to raise the strength in subsequent attempts. Note that this same formula is used for **Subvert Town** actions, except that the "Bs" element of the first formula is changed from a plus to a minus (i.e., the local bureaucracy hinders, rather than helps).

When supporting the nobility, key elements are Rulership and Charisma in order to raise the strength and loyalty respectively. Here are the formulae for the percentage chance of increasing

the strength and loyalty of one's nobility and *decreasing* the strength and loyalty of the local towns *by one* by performing the **Support Nobles** action:

Increasing Noble Strength
Rule x 13 - DF

Increasing Noble Loyalty
Char x 13 - DF - Bs x 2

Decreasing Town Strength
(Ts - Ns) x 5

Decreasing Town Loyalty
(Ts - Ns) x 10 + DF

Again, here is a situation in which, if a player supports the *weaker* element, the stronger element will tend to "get jealous" and decrease in value.

On Behalf of Quill Pushers

As a general rule, it is wise to raise the bureaucracy level of an area to about two or three. The Court Province, naturally, can be raised higher than this in order to efficiently raise an army (this will be explained in detail later). The purpose of bureaucracy is to increase the amount of the "King's cut" with regard to the taxes collected in an area (with the remainder going "down the privy" to the nobles). The key element is the Leader's Rulership rating. These formulae give the percentage chance for adjusting the indicated elements *by one* when attempting the **Support Bureaucrat** action:

Increase Bureaucracy
Rule x 11 - DF

Decrease Noble Strength
Bs x 5 + Castles x 5 - DF

Decrease Noble Loyalty
Bs x 15 - Char x 2

Basically, one should not attempt to increase the bureaucracy in a province where the strength of the nobility is critical, as it will tend to erode the base of one's military might — although, as a prelude to building towns, increasing the bureaucracy level is a good starting point. After all, they *always* have a chance to lower nobility ratings, while increasing towns only accomplishes this when the nobles happen to have been "bigger" than the towns before the Support Town action was taken.

Call to Arms

At some point, a Leader is going to want a lot of troops at his back in battle. The trick, of course, is knowing where to get the most "clank for his ducat." Keep in mind that when raising nobles and levies, all nobles and levies currently in the army are dismissed (i.e., they do not accumulate from call to call). Here, then, are some formulae for raising troops, plus a few handy pointers which follow:

Raising Household Troops
Available = Ts x (Bs + 1) / 2 x Pop / (33 - Year / 100) + [Rand(2)]
[If the year > 1300]

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Note: this formula is used when raising Household Troops in the Court Province only. In any other province, it is averaged between that province and the Court Province based on this formula, unless the non-Court province is able to provide a larger result.

The Limit of Troops That Can Be Raised in One Turn

Limit = Available {see formula above} x (70 + Char x 2 + Warlike x 2 [+10]) / 100
[if treasury is greater than 50 ducats]
If Limit < 3, **Then** Limit = Rand(3)
Limit = Limit - Current number of Household Troops in army / 3

Note: the "If limit" test in this equation is provided to offer assistance to players with small empires so that they have a chance of raising some Household Troops.

Raising Mercenary Troops

Available = Ts x (Bs + 1) / 2 x Pop / 9 + Rand(4)

Note: This formula is used when raising Mercenaries in the Court Province only. In any other province, it is averaged between that province and the Court Province (based on this formula), unless the non-Court province is able to provide a larger result.

Limit = Available {see formula above} x (70 + Char x 2 [+5]) / 100 - Current number of Household Troops in army / 3
[if treasury is greater than 50 ducats]

For Vassals, Nobles and Nomads, the formulae made available were sketchy, but some clear indicators were present. For raising Vassals, Noble Loyalty and Distance Factor are the key elements. Thus, try to position the Leader in the center of the loyal noble heartland of the empire in order to raise Vassals. Raising Nobles presents a similar situation, except that it depends less on Noble Loyalty and more on the Leader's Charisma and, to a lesser extent, Warlikeness.

Nomads are a special case. They seem to depend *heavily* on Noble Loyalty, without any "distance factor." In effect, they rally to the banners in a very effective manner whenever called upon.

For ships, the "shipyard capacities" are pretty straightforward. The number of 10-ship squadrons that can be raised each action is:

Ship Construction Per Action Limit

2 x the number of [sea provinces] currently owned (excluding provinces in revolt)

[Only the computer knows which provinces are "sea provinces." Presumably, they're only the ones that allow a sea move from them, rather than just all the ones that border on the ocean.]

An Emissary to See You, Sire

It is hoped that the formulae presented in this article are sufficient to provide even the most insecure "royal advisor" with a reasonable chance to guide his ruler toward founding the greatest empire in the entire realm of *Medieval Lords*. At least, one has sufficient information to "count the cost" before entering into battle. **cgw**

Worth a Sacrifice?

U.S. Gold's The Gold of the Aztecs

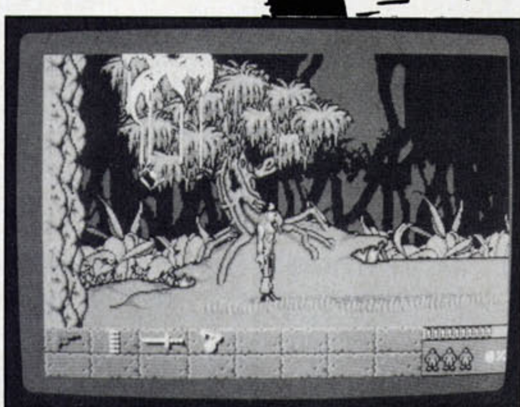
TITLE:	The Gold of the Aztecs
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED:	Amiga
COPY PROTECT:	Code Wheel
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Kinetica Software
PUBLISHER:	U.S. Gold Ltd. San Jose, CA

By Peter Olafson

Arcade adventures have been taking a nip from Alice's bottle. They just keep getting bigger: bigger levels, bigger end-of-level "bosses," richer backdrops and a wider range of things to grab and use. More and more, they are coming to resemble action versions of adventure games.

The latest such creation to reach these shores — courtesy of **U.S. Gold**'s recent distribution deal with **Accolade** — is *The Gold of the Aztecs* (*GOTA*). In spirit, *GOTA* is a 16-bit version of that splendid climbing-and-running game of 8-bit yore, *Montezuma's Revenge*. In substance, it's another huge, attractive and difficult game brought up under the *Shadow of the Beast*.

GOTA allows the player to control Bret Conrad, an ex-Special Forces guy with a lot of nonregulation hair who has inherited the digs of a great-uncle in Tijuana and found a map to an Aztec tomb behind a centerfold. What we have here is the bones of any number of B-movies — but with a distinctive thrill-ride sensibility. For example, if Bret takes a little too long in cutting himself loose from his parachute in the first sequence and cannot treat with the overweight native greeters in an acceptable amount of game time, he may be visited by an extremely large, gray and intractable blitter object. It's startling, it's delightful (and well-done),



How to Avoid Becoming Cannibal Cuisine

by Bret Conrad, Explorer Plenipotentiary

The bigger they are, the harder they fall. *Gold of the Aztecs* is not an easy game. This primer should see you safely through the first region (aboveground) and then some.

1. When finished using your gun or machete, be sure to quickly center your joystick and release the fire button. Otherwise, the weapon remains active, and you won't be able to move until it's put away. I have observed that this is a leading cause of accidental death among my fellow explorers.

2. Use your gun freely when fired upon. It will knock down most projectile weapons.

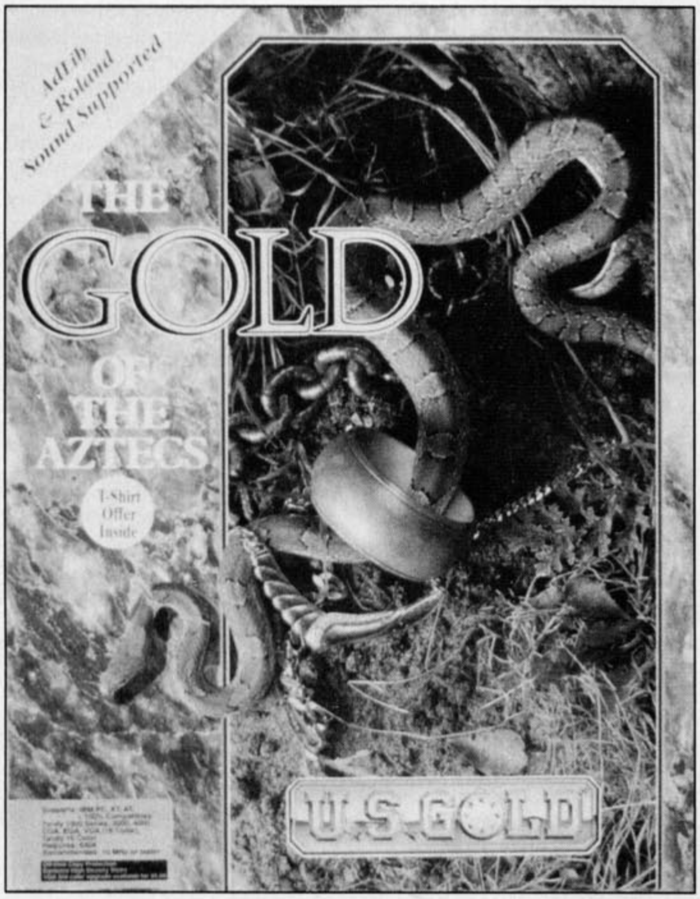
3. Leave the vultures alone. They will do you no harm unless you're in their path. Standing still for their passage, and then making a quick exit (as they will recycle along a different path), is usually the best policy.

4. Not every creature in the game can be killed. Some, like the man-eating plants in the first region and the spider in the third, must simply be avoided. Keep an eye out for leafy landmarks at the bottom of the screen to help time your jumps.

5. Watch the remaining ammo in your clip. Yes, it's infinite, and reloading is automatic while firing, but there's a short pause while reloading takes place and it's just long enough for the baddies to tie their napkins behind their necks.

6. The guard at the bridge is a little... well, old. He'd probably come apart if you took a step in his direction. (On the other hand, don't get too chummy. The sword is sharp.) The same holds true for some of the simpler creatures in your path.

7. Yes, that stone door after the bridge does open — it's the entrance to the rest of the game — but you'll need to explore further to find the trigger. It's not obvious, and might even be mistaken for background detail.



and it is a warning: Expect the unexpected from *The Gold of the Aztecs*.

Uh... an elephant? In the Yucatan? Well, they're suggested in the docs — apparently the map-maker brought them along to haul supplies — so this one would be the, perhaps, several-greats grandchild of elephants. (One often has to wonder with these games whether the story or the graphics came first.)

Trumpeting the Action

This is not a simple "kill or be stomped by the elephants game," however. Whereas Bret *does* come supplied with gun and machete and *can* snuff the life out of all creatures great and small (whether the little beer-bellied natives with blowguns, the coconut- and skull-chucking monkeys or the snakes in the grass), he doesn't *have* to kill them. In fact, scenes often can be escaped peacefully (contact is not always deadly) and, with a little luck, a player might be able to navigate Bret through the first region without firing more than one shot. Indeed, the one shot is only to dispatch the panther which simultaneously guards the first cache and the way into the second region. One *is* after treasure, after all!

It is a rare arcade game that permits nonviolent solutions, and it is a pleasure to play the sly evader rather than another great white hunter enforcing population control to shore up his bank account.

GOTA's dusky tapestry — about 90 percent of it consists of underground scenes — does not scroll, but each level loads into memory at once, so there is little waiting. Each of the 80-plus scenes is a set-piece puzzle with one way in and one way out. However, there are enough stray platforms, ropes and ladders to

suggest other avenues. Of course, they aren't *really* other avenues. They are actually dead ends, invariably offering nasty consequences for the visitor. So, as with most of the games in this genre, success is in good part a process of elimination: one plays a bit, finds a trap (and, presumably, dies horribly in it), plays a bit more, makes it past the trap, finds another one, dies even more horribly and the cycle continues. In this game, however, one does not simply die, mind you. Once underground, death means a spectacular fall through quite a few as-yet-unvisited screens, with arms and legs flailing.

Naturally, this could become agony after a while, but *GOTA* keeps the fun alive with a variety of thoughtful puzzles. Some rely on careful jumping (and a willingness to take a leap of faith), some on a quick trigger finger and accurate aim, others an eye for detail and inter-connectedness, and others on a reckless disregard for any life not your own.

It's all rather like an Indiana Jones movie minus Indy. (Indeed, it is mildly reminiscent of the action version of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, another U.S. Gold product.) There are coming attractions (a scrolling map of the game environment in the style of **Capcom**'s *Ghouls'N Ghosts*), a snackbar sweet (a screen suggestive of **Kinetica**'s next game) and a cartoon (a cute little animation of natives feeding a goat-headed god. I waited around for him to tear into one of the feeders as an appetizer, but no such luck.)

Come to think of it, the whole enterprise is billed on the box rather like one of those 1950s movie spectaculars: 27,000 man-hours, 18,000 pieces of graphics, 7,000 frames of animation, 140 hero actions. Those are impressive stats, but when people start getting empirical about their code, one cannot help but wonder if there is something amiss at the play end.

Frequent Faller Mileage

Actually, there are a few things mildly amiss with *The Gold of the Aztecs*. The joystick and spacebar command a wide variety of options, but joystick response is a bit sluggish. Occasionally, one will discover such anomalies as when Bret is jumping and misses his intended rope, only to successfully grab an invisible one nearby. The routine that determines whether a character has a secure footing or should fall is rather unforgiving (though this could just be the disappointed cry of a frequent-faller).

While the label on the box indicates that the copy protection is off-disk, AmigaDOS's bewilderment with the two nonDOS disks, the inability of third-party copiers to make a playable version and the tormented groaning of disk drives during play suggest otherwise.

What's off-disk is a black-on-black codewheel that must be aligned and realigned no fewer than four times.

There is one other matter. The character *moves* funny, sort of as though he was in the Wehrmacht during World War II. With more than 7,000 frames of hero animation and more than 140 hero actions, wouldn't you suppose Kinetica could have designed a hero who didn't goosestep as though he was from the Ministry of Silly Walks? (Fortunately, he also does a nice shuffling step that comes in handy at the many precipices.)

Pot o' Gold

Yet, as with any good game, players will learn the ways of *The Gold of the Aztecs* because they will want to and the game's conventions will quickly become second nature. Once this occurs, action gamers simply cannot help but fall for it... and fall... and fall... and fall. **cgw**



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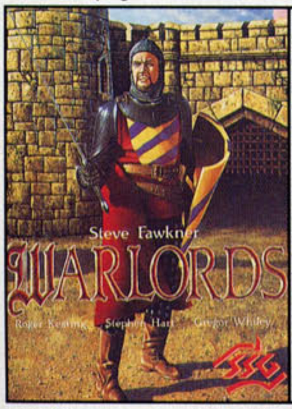
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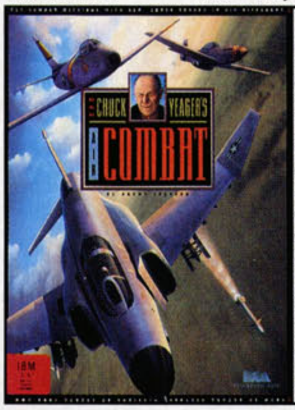
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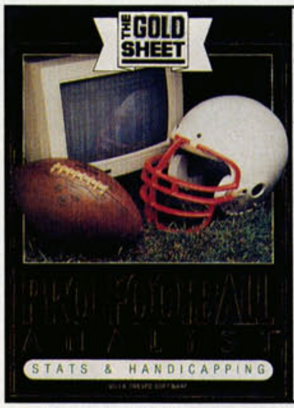
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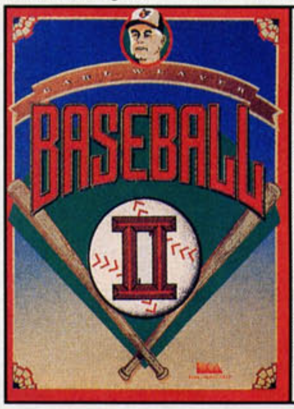
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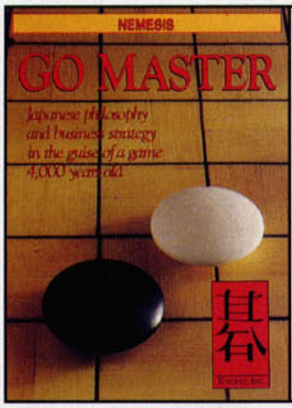
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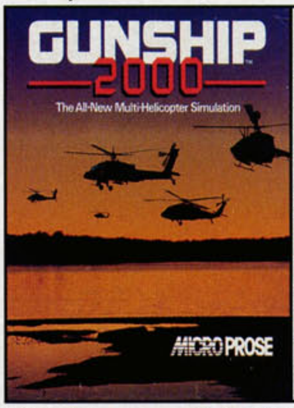
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Circle Reader Service #28

Letters from Paradise





Bored at Peace

I've been reading a lot lately about the decline of computer wargames and I have several questions. Is there any good news on the horizon concerning this genre? Whatever happened to **SSG**'s proposed *Campaigns of Napoleon* game? Is *CGW* planning on reviewing *UMS II: Nations At War* any time soon? Your insight to these questions would be greatly appreciated.

Mitch Willis
Wetumpka, AL

Actually, Mitch, the problem isn't the decline of computer wargames as much as it is the decline of computer wargame sales. The technological advances in computer entertainment software have raised the ante on production costs to such a high level that it is difficult to at least break even on low-volume, niche-market sales like computer wargames. **SSG** *is indeed ready to try the waters with a "pure" wargame with their superb-looking remake of* Carriers At War. *If this product happens to perform with the mediocre volume attributed to most wargames from 1989-1990, the "pure" wargame market may never be resuscitated. As for the Napoleonic game, we talked to Ian Trout about it at the recent Origins game convention in Baltimore. Ian felt that there was insufficient interest in the era among computer wargamers. He expressed disappointment that the product did not look viable from a marketing perspective, any more than the "Seven Years War" design he would love to do. This year's wargame releases from* **Avalon Hill, SSI, SSG** *and* **RAW Entertainment** *will very likely offer the final chance for computer wargaming to prove that it is a "real" market for software publishers.*

The Emperor's Old Clothes

I keep hearing rumors about an *Empire II* with bombers, paratroops, possible stacking and etc. Would you ask the Rumor Bag Guy whether this is just wishful thinking or cold hard rumor?

Mike Provant
Oregon City, OR

Our fearless rumormonger got his head out of his bag long enough to tell us that Mark Baldwin is not currently doing any coding on Empire II. *He has been too busy working on* The Perfect General *(sneak previewed in this issue) to work on the design. Also, our RBG tells us that there is no signed contract to publish the on-again, off-again sequel to the* CGW Hall of Fame *game.*

Steep Grade Ahead

Let's see more games in development from start to finish — a sort of game diary. And let's stop grading your writers' abilities. It is demeaning and very arbitrary. Most of the game players I know wouldn't know good prose if it rose up and bit 'em on the ass. *Stop* grading writers' abilities.

Nicholas Peters
Wichita, KS

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Circle Reader Service #67



We are not really "grading" our writers nor even allowing our readers to do so. The purpose of the article ratings has always been to build enough of a database of reader evaluations to determine whether our occasional experimental or analytical articles are useful to the readership. After all, if we are not meeting the overall needs of our readers, we do not have any reason for publishing. In fact, your request to see more about games in development has more weight because our readers responded so positively to our "Behind The Screens" look at The Adventures of Willy Beamish *that we are not only presenting a follow-up look in this issue, but we have more feature articles like this lined up for the future. The bottom line is that we value the R.I.D. responses very highly. In fact, we have reduced the number of questions on the latest Reader Input Device in order to attempt to get even more responses and hence, an even more valuable set of game ratings.*

A "DOS" of Our Own Medicine

As an owner of two systems (Amiga 500 and IBM 286 clone with VGA card and an AdLib sound card), sometimes your reviews are confusing to me. When a new game comes out, I usually have a tough decision to make in determining which system to buy for. Both computers have their pros and cons, so I rely heavily on magazine reviews. *Your* reviews tend to be MS-DOS biased and fail to mention any differences in the machine versions. Sometimes, you fail to even mention if it is even available for the Amiga! Maybe you can rectify this?

Tim Young
Fullerton, CA

Remember the Joseph Heller novel called Catch 22? *It was about WWII bomber pilots who could only get out of active duty if they were certified to be crazy. Yet the air corps psychiatrists believed that if the pilots were actually* crazy, *they would not want to get out of duty. Hence, no one could win.* CGW *experiences a "Catch 22" on the issue of conversions. It is our editorial policy that no finished product exists until we actually have a copy in the office. This protects the readership against the likelihood of charging down to their local software stores and finding out that the product will not be in for three to six months. That is why we tried from the beginning to delineate sneak previews as such and why we have added a note explaining the purpose of sneak previews to our most recent feature previews.*

It is not that we are MS-DOS biased. Rather, it is that we review the programs as quickly as we can get our hands on them. Usually, the first one in our hands is an MS-DOS version with an Amiga (and sometimes an Atari ST or Apple IIGS) version expected right behind it. Sometimes, "right behind it" means months. *Since we will not review a game that we have not had "hands on" experience with, this often means that there would be a delay of several months before we could even review the MS-DOS product were we to wait and review the MS-DOS product simultaneously with the conversion.*

Now, here's the "Catch 22" part. If we wait until we have the conversions in hand, our readers complain that we take too long to review the games. Our readers (80% MS-DOS) get very unhappy when we do not get the reviews out promptly. If we do another review or a strategy article when the conversion comes out (as we did with Dragon-Strike*), we get chided for being out of date by any of our readers who happened to miss the original article. (This really happens!) If the conversion actually comes out on time (as they do on occasion), we may have the review at the printer when the conversion hits the shelves. So, when the readers who own the machine which the conversion is for happen to get their copies of the magazine, they think we slighted their machine on purpose. Frankly, we cannot win. If we list the upcoming conversions and* hope *they come out on time, we will be accused of pandering vaporware if they do not arrive on time. If the conversion comes out before the review on the initial version arrives in our readers' mailboxes, we are accused of sabotaging their machines. While this does not* rectify *the situation, we hope it will clarify it.*

Game Editors Are Easy

I am troubled by what I see as an unwillingness on the part of computer game magazines to criticize major game publishers for poor performance. My primary grievance is currently with **Lucasfilm Games** for their tardiness in releasing *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe.* I consider myself a loyal **Lucasfilm** gamer who has purchased several of their games and intends to buy more. However, I believe that they should be aware that their consumers are unhappy with their practices. I understand that *Secret Weapons* was to be a Christmas 1990 release but, due to technical problems, **Lucasfilm** pushed the release back to the first quarter of 1991. As March came and went, the date was pushed back to the second quarter, and is now, I believe, hovering around August 1. Because I can respect a concern for technical problems, I do not expect **Lucasfilm** to rush a faulty product onto the market. However, they have continued to set unrealistic release dates that come and go and, more importantly, continue to purchase full-page advertisements for a software package which will not be out for months.

I turned to *Computer Gaming World* as the most thoughtful and intelligent of the computer gaming magazines to find some editorial comment, but was disappointed. After your excellent review of the design process of the game and interview with Lawrence Holland and Williamson Murray in your December 1990 issue, I expected to see something more about why the game was delayed and, yes, perhaps even some criticism. More general computer magazines have harshly criticized **Microsoft**, **Ashton-Tate**, **Word Perfect**, **Lotus** and other companies who fail to release their software packages as scheduled or whose products fail to live up to pre-release claims. Should the standards for game software publishers be any different? Individual letters to a company, I believe, have far less impact than an honest evaluation by a magazine editor who can



speak for his or her readers. I believe that *Computer Gaming World* does its readers a disservice by printing advertisements for games that will not be released soon, without also offering them some editorial criticism of those companies who offer *only* advertisements.

I wish **Lucasfilm Games** success with *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, but I also hope that computer gamers will pause to think before they buy their copy about the promises broken along the way to its release. I am sure other companies also fail to meet their release dates and advertise unreleased games for months, but that is where *CGW* can make a difference. By pointing out these failures, perhaps your magazine can prompt other companies to pause before they advertise uncompleted games and set unrealistic dates.

Daniel W. Stowell
Gainesville, FL

We would give considerably more credence to your argument if we could see any empirical evidence whatsoever that the Lotus-bashing and Microsoft-haranguing in the press had either: a) improved the products concerned or b) accelerated the process in which the products came to market. It may have sounded dumb at the time, but the immortal words of baseball manager Yogi Berra ("It ain't over till it's over!") could easily be applied to software ("It ain't done till it is!").

As we noted in a recent editorial (and earlier in this letters column), the technological ante has been raised on computer software and this has brought new problems to the programming and production process. Software publishers are having difficulty in gauging the amount of time required to accomplish "state of the art" programming tasks and judging the amount of human resources necessary to accomplish them. Hence, they set release dates based on what "always worked before" and "according to our experience" when they are working on projects like Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe, MegaFortress, F-117A *and* Falcon 3.0 *and cannot meet their own goals. In the meantime, they have contracted to run advertisements four to six months in advance of when they* thought *the games would be finished. If the companies waited until the games were already on the shelves to start advertising them, they would probably lose shelf space in the retail stores before the demand hit. There are lots of problems that consumers haven't considered in this process and we fail to see how criticizing the process would help. We perceive that the delays on future products will be less noticeable as software publishers have more experience to guide them on current production standards. In the meantime, don't expect* CGW *to change its stance. We simply cannot believe that unprofessional nagging would accomplish anything on behalf of our readers or the industry.*

Spirit of Freedom

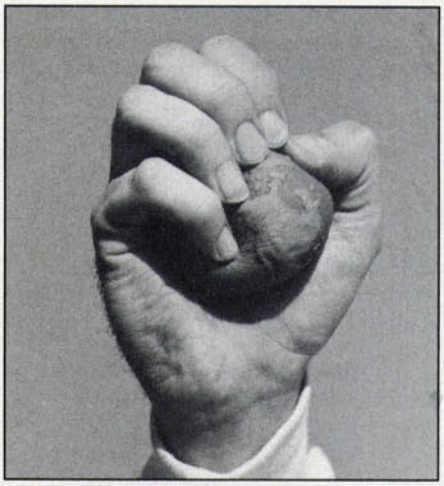
In *CGW* #84, I personally found the "Take A Peek" review of *Sex Olympics* by **Free Spirit** to be offensive. While I realize that *CGW* is not a Christian magazine, but is staffed by several Christians, I still feel that reviewing a game with that type plot flies in the spirit of Psalm 9:1-2. I also don't feel that this is an issue of "freedom of speech" versus "censorship," but just good sense, in that this magazine is not only read by adults but also by children.

Mike Stephens
Mesquite, TX

The same week that we received Mike's letter, our publisher received a letter asking him to reign in the overt religious messages being printed in the magazine by Dr. Wilson. The letter is too long to print in this column, but suggested that Wilson placed spiritual references in the magazine even when they were irrelevant to the games being covered. Basically, both correspondents miss the point. The activist agnostic failed to see that it is better to have a reviewer spell out his personal bias than to be blindsided by it. The offended believer fails to see that a "Taking a Peek" mention is not *a review. It serves to let readers know what is available. It is our policy to print a "Taking A Peek" on any new entertainment products which we receive, even if we do not personally care for them. To do otherwise* is *a censorship issue. It would mean that we only tell our readers what we want them to know. That is no longer journalism. It is self-appointed, self-serving censorship.* CGW



Reach Out and Crush Someone



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Wargamers Addicted to Strategic Play ("WASP") invites you to call the Wizard's Tower BBS, home of the Modem Warriors. Tournaments and opponents for COMMAND HQ, MODEM WARS, 688 ATTACK SUB, KNIGHTS OF THE SKY and more. Find an opponent at (901) 757-2711 (2400,8,N,1), which is the Memphis, TN area. Mention this ad in *CGW* and get access to the WASP message base!

Call THE IMPERIUM BBS. We run tournaments for COMMAND HQ, KNIGHTS OF THE SKY, FIRETEAM 2200, MODEM WARS and many more. Online games are available, too! Call one of our three nodes in Middleton, NJ at either: 1200/2400 (908) 706-0342; 9600 v.32 (908) 706-0305; HST Dual Standard 38.4 (908) 706-0321. We have 650 megs online.

Opponents wanted for XSHIP, a space conquest strategy game. The game is played via BBS with two to ten players per game. Game turns update as fast as the players take their turns. For more information, call the BATTLEFIELD BBS in North Babylon, NY at (516) 669-0522 300/1200/2400 8-N-1.

By Area Code

Veteran wargamer seeks opponents for SECOND FRONT and other wargames (IBM) for hand-to-hand combat or trading sickette salvos via the mail. Combatants can call John Barnes in Westfield, NJ at H-(201)-232-5831. Be warned, I am an expert player and take *no* prisoners.

Local wargamers sought for modem play of COMMAND HQ, MODEM WARS, FIRETEAM 2200 or face-to-face with BATTLES OF NAPOLEON, RED LIGHTNING, WARLORDS and many others. Call Ben Tobin in Tacoma, WA at H-(206) 581-1944.

I can't get enough modem COMMAND HQ!! I also play other wargames. Please call Mike in Palo Alto, CA from 7-12pm Pacific time at H-(415) 322-5203.

COMMAND HQ opponents sought in local area codes. Call Simon in Albany, CA at H-(415) 528-5327.

Opponent wanted for COMMAND HQ or other modem games in the Toronto area. Call David Pratt in Toronto, Ontario at H-(416) 487-8851.

Average skilled player seeks opponent of average skill for COMMAND HQ in my area code. Call Matt in Cincinnati, OH at H-(513) 741-4248.

Modem warriors wanted in Phoenix, AZ area. POWERMONGER, POPULOUS, OPERATION COM*BAT, even face-to-face with many computer wargames to choose from. Call Andy at H(602) 482-0921.

COMMAND HQ opponents sought in metro area codes (703/202/301). Call Dan in Reston, VA at H-(703) 620-6270 or W-(703) 418-3220 anytime up to 11pm Eastern time.

Opponent wanted for F-29 RETALIATOR and KNIGHTS OF THE SKY. Information also available on ESTARIAN CONQUEST (CGW #83, p. 74). Contact Tim in Orange County, CA by voice at (714) 857-1546. Local opponents only, please.

Beginning modem game player seeking opponents via modem. I'm especially interested in 688 ATTACK SUB and FALCON 3.0. Call Gene Desepoli in Queens, NY at H-(718) 723-0018 to leave a message.

Veteran warrior wanted for the following games: FALCON 3.0, AVENGER A-10, COMMAND HQ, KNIGHTS OF THE SKY, MODEM WARS and WING COMMANDER II. You can reach me on America Online/PC Link [MARCD10] or on CompuServe [70172,142] or call Marc Dultz in Bayside, NY at H-(718) 465-3292 after 9pm Eastern time.

Modem opponents wanted for 688, F-16 COMBAT PILOT, TANK, COMMAND HQ and FIRE BRIGADE. Call Rick Billings in Abilene, TX at H-(915) 698-6853; on CompuServe [73240,2742]. **CGW**

Circle Reader Service #50 »

Computer Gaming World's

See Reader Input Device on page 78

The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Wing Commander*	*Origin*	*AC*	*95*	*10.63*
2.	*Railroad Tycoon*	*MicProse*	*ST*	*82*	*10.56*
3.	*Red Baron*	*Dynamix*	*SI*	*70*	*10.35*
4.	*Their Finest Hour*	*LucasFilm*	*AC,SI*	*108*	*10.30*
5.	*Warlords*	*SSG*	*WG,ST*	*49*	*9.92*
6.	*Space Quest IV*	*Sierra*	*AD*	*38*	*9.65*
7.	*SimCity*	*Maxis*	*ST,SI*	*127*	*9.54*
8.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*WG*	*77*	*9.48*
9.	*Ultima VI*	*Origin*	*RP*	*71*	*9.43*
10.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicroProse*	*SI,WG*	*75*	*9.38*

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
11.	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	23	9.35
12.	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	73	9.29
13.	King's Quest V	Sierra	AD	51	9.25
	Flight Simulator 4.0	Microsoft	SI	40	9.25
15.	Command HQ	MicroPlay	ST	53	9.21
16.	Second Front	SSI	WG	38	9.17
17.	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	52	9.16
	MechWarrior	Activision	ST	54	9.16
19.	Wings	Cinemaware	AC	33	9.15
20.	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	74	9.13
21.	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	28	9.10
22.	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	62	9.08
23.	Battlehawks 1942	LucasFilm	AC,SI	86	9.05
24.	Ultima V	Origin	RP	91	9.01
25.	Quest for Glory	Sierra	RP	57	9.00
	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix/Sierra	AD	37	9.00
	Lords of Rising Sun	Cinemaware	AC,ST	48	9.00
28.	Space Quest III	Sierra	AD	34	8.97
	Sword of Aragon	SSI	WG,ST	45	8.97
30.	Populous	Electronic Arts	ST	114	8.96
	Romance of the 3 Kingdoms	Koei	ST,RP	31	8.96
32.	Secret of Monkey Island	Lucasfilm	AD	29	8.95
	Wasteland	Electronic Arts	RP	117	8.95
34.	Overrun	SSI	WG	24	8.93
35.	Falcon	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	62	8.90
36.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	RP	30	8.87
	NFL Challenge	XOR Corporation	ST	86	8.87
	Indianapolis 500	EA	SI	32	8.87
39.	Power Monger	Electronic Arts	ST	45	8.81
	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	RP	54	8.81
41.	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	RP	43	8.80
	LHX Attack Chopper	EA	AC	25	8.80
43.	Project Stealth Ftr	MicroProse	SI	29	8.79
44.	Bard's Tale III	EA	RP	54	8.77
	Leisure Suit III	Sierra	AD	47	8.77
46.	Airborne Ranger	MicroProse	AC	74	8.76
47.	Bandit Kings	Koei	ST,RP	28	8.75
48.	Covert Action	Microprose	AD	30	8.73
	Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf	Accolade	ST	26	8.73
	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	30	8.73
	Shanghai II	Activision	ST	17	8.73
52.	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	62	8.72
53.	Action Stations	Conflict Analytics	WG	22	8.71
	Breach 2	Omnitrend	ST,RP	29	8.71
	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	63	8.79

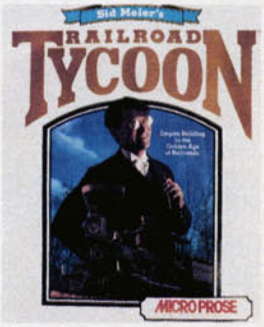
THE HALL OF FAME

The Games in CGW's Hall of Fame Have Been Highly Rated by our Readers over Time. They are Worthy of Play by All.

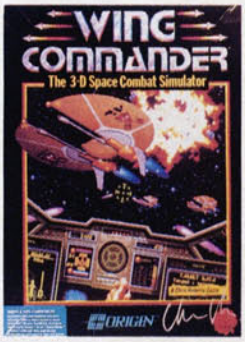
Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
F19 Stealth Fighter
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Their Finest Hour
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
56.	Neuromancer	Interplay	AD	33	8.70
57.	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	SI	58	8.69
58.	Elvira	Accolade	RP	31	8.68
59.	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	43	8.67
	Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI	RP	70	8.67
	Sword of the Samurai	MicroProse	ST,RP	40	8.67
62.	Ishido	Accolade	ST	28	8.65
	Chessmaster 2100	Software Toolworks	ST	44	8.65
	Indiana Jones/Graphic Adventure	Lucasfilm	AD	29	8.65
	Ballistyx	Psygnosis	AC	20	8.65
66.	Wayne Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	AC,ST	36	8.62
67.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	RP	116	8.61
68.	Champions of Krynn	SSI	RP	65	8.60
69.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	AD	58	8.59
70.	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	39	8.57
71.	It Came From Desert	Cinemaware	AD	36	8.54
	Genghis Khan	Koei	ST,RP	34	8.54
73.	Future Wars	Interplay	AD	24	8.53
74.	Panzer Strike	SSI	WG	68	8.51
75.	Carrier Command	MicroPlay	AC,WG	49	8.51
76.	Savage Empire	Origin	RP	37	8.48
77.	Knights of the Sky	MicroProse	SI	45	8.44
78.	Manhunter 2	Sierra	AD	31	8.42
79.	Nobunaga's Ambition II	Koei	ST,RP	20	8.40
80.	TV Sports Football	Cinemaware	AC,ST	50	8.39
	Secret of the Silver Blades	SSI	RP	47	8.39
82.	Wings of Fury	Broderbund	AC	52	8.38
83.	Strike Fleet	Electronic Arts	WG	79	8.37
84.	DeathTrack	Activision	AC	28	8.35
84.	Fire Brigade	Panther	WG	30	8.34
85.	BattleTech II: Revenge	Infocom	WG,RP	42	8.33
86.	Rocket Ranger	Cinemaware	AC,AD	75	8.32
87.	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	ST,RP	20	8.30
88.	Police Quest II	Sierra	AD	39	8.29
	TV Sports Basketball	Cnmwre	AC,ST	33	8.29
91.	Drakkhen	Data East	RP	32	8.27
	688 Attack Sub	EA	SI,ST	59	8.27
93.	Flight of the Intruder	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	25	8.26
	Lord of the Rings	Interplay	RP	31	8.26
95.	Manhunter	Sierra	AD	72	8.25
96.	Centurion	EA	ST	49	8.24
97.	Police Quest	Sierra	AD	98	8.23
98.	Starglider II	MicroPlay	AC,SI	65	8.22
99.	Jack Nickluas Greatest 18 Holes	Accolade	ST	32	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cinemaware	AD	68	8.21

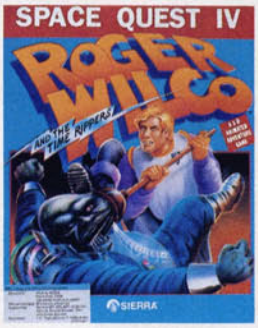
Top Strategy



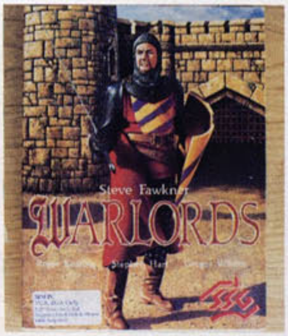
Top Action



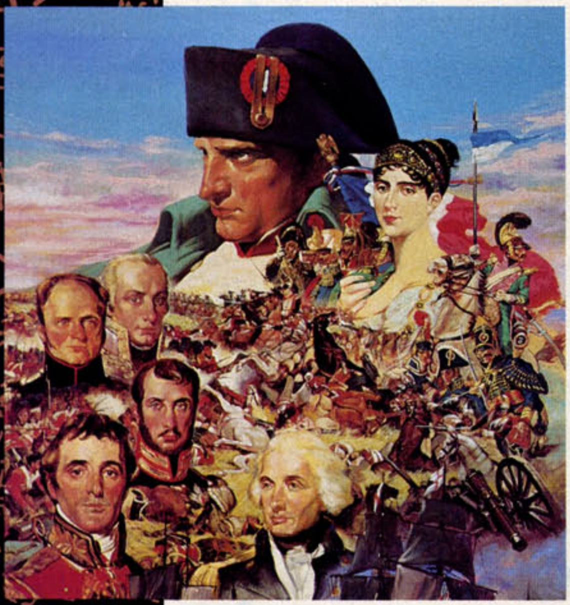
Top Adventure



Top Wargame



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NES Version*: 3 megabit cartridge, MMC-5 microchip 128K RAM, Battery back-up*

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NES screen shot shown



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NES screen shot shown



New pull-down menus

PC screen shot shown



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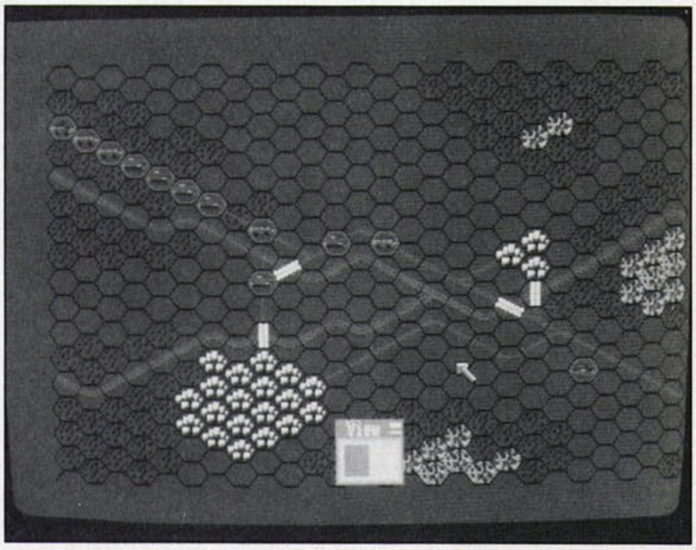
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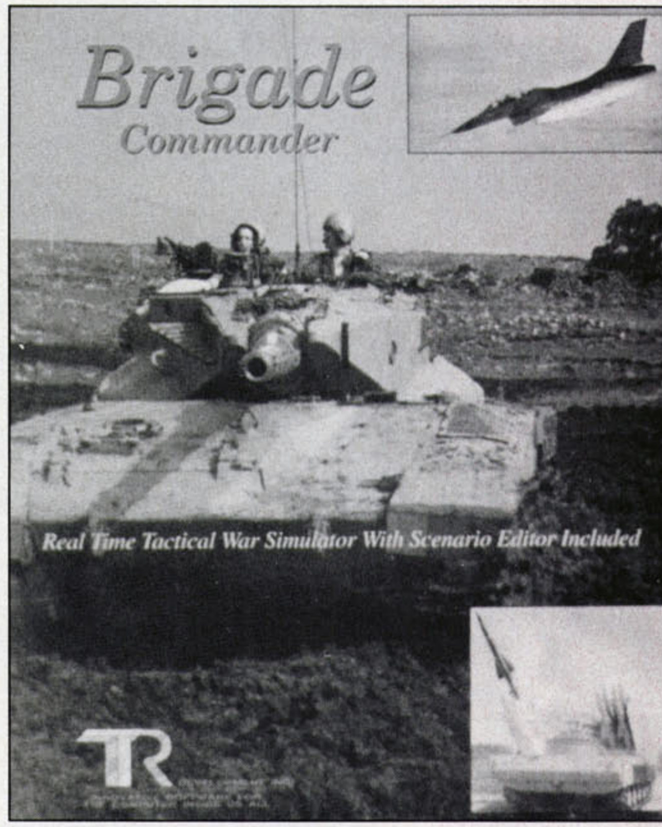
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Circle Reader Service #44





Earning Stars and Bars

A Review of Brigade Commander

by Leah Wesolowski

TITLE:	Brigade Commander
SYSTEM:	Amiga
# PLAYERS:	1
PRICE:	$44.95
COPY PROTECT:	None
PUBLISHER:	TTR Development 6701 Seybold Rd., #220 Madison, WI

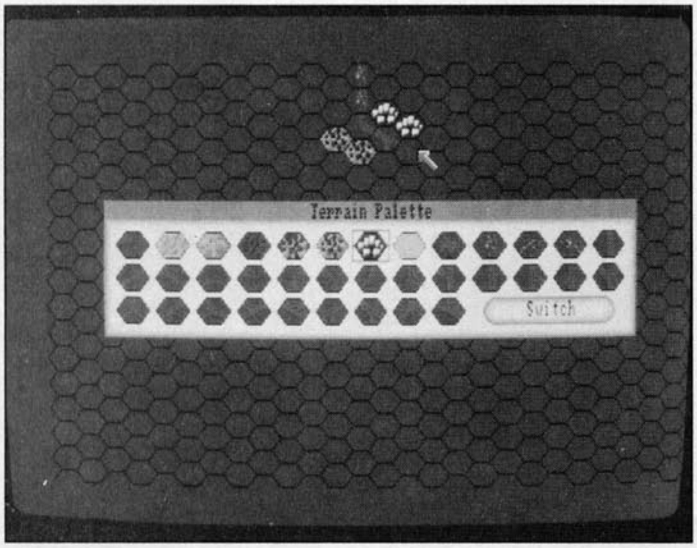
Brigade Commander, **TTR**'s first venture into the field of entertainment software for the Amiga, is such an impressive first effort that it should probably be decorated! This is due to the game's versatility, ease of play and its tense, real-time action. *Brigade Commander* is a tactical-level, modern-era wargame played in real time, in which the units are platoons that maneuver around a hex map (akin to those great classics by boardgame giant **Avalon Hill**). The game contains a number of different scenarios, including an extra disk based on Operation: Desert Storm. To further the game's potential shelf life even more, a built-in editing program allows players to create and modify their own scenarios.

The sounds of battle are part and parcel of the effective aural bombardment in *Brigade Commander*, but players will not find any fancy graphics to glorify war or desensitize players to the violence inherent in its practice. For many Amiga owners, this could be a disappointment, since it is easy to be spoiled by the Amiga's graphics capabilities. However, anything *Brigade Commander* lacks in graphics, it more than compensates for in sheer gaming pleasure.

Formations

There are *many* types of units available to the player, everything from the horse-drawn cart on land and propeller-driven aircraft in the skies to modern Chobham-armored tanks and jet aircraft. These units can be armed with everything from the standard small arms to the latest in high-tech weaponry. There are supply trucks and choppers to carry extra ammunition or transport platoons. Support is also available in just about any form, with the main difference between support units and regular formations being that the player has little control over how the support units will respond (if they will respond at all).

Each unit has its own detailed specifications and unique weaponry. Clicking on an occupied hex brings up a window displaying all of the units present within that hex (ten units can occupy a hex at one time). Clicking on a particular unit within that window brings up yet another window containing information relating to that particular unit. From that window, the player can access plenty of other information, including details concerning its available weaponry, damage sustained and the unit's current orders. All this information, and more, is readily available simply by clicking on the pertinent on-screen buttons. While a noble attempt to simplify information access, the implementation doesn't quite "click." The problem is that whenever the player brings up these information windows, he cannot perform any action on any other window until all the topmost windows have been closed. Furthermore, those windows are not movable! This "clunkiness" might be forgivable in a wargame with phased movement, but it is horrendous in a real-time wargame! Players should, at least, be allowed to view the ensuing battle going on underneath these windows.



Going "By the Book"

Brigade Commander is easy to play, but because of its real-time nature, is quite a challenge to master. Fortunately, movement is simple to initiate, with the player able to move a lone unit or a group of units (up to ten at a time). Attacking enemy units is also a simple proposition. The player chooses the unit to prosecute the attack and then the hex where the enemy is located. Clicking on the enemy unit(s) residing within that hex allows the player to attack one or several enemy units at once.

Opportunity fire is handled by the program. When enemy units come within range of a friendly unit, the game automatically selects one of the latter's weapons and begins to fire, whether or not the player has armed it or instructed it to fire. The player may choose to have that unit fire elsewhere (and with a different weapon), but does not have to do so.

This reviewer was favorably impressed with one user-friendly feature. In very large battles, where the player has a high concentration of units in one area, it is easy to lose track of exactly which unit one is directing at the time. Fortunately, position and unit status windows pop up throughout the game and are located such that a colored corner of the window points to the appropriate hex. This feature is quite helpful, but would be more useful if it was implemented more often throughout the game. If modified to display a red or blue color-coded corner, it could have been of even greater assistance.

The Art of War Design

Brigade Commander comes with many scenarios, including a disk of hypothetical Persian Gulf encounters (with accurate weapons specifications). Although some of the game's scenarios are difficult, the Desert Storm data disk contains (surprise!) mostly one-sided battles which are very easy to win. (Unless, of course, the masochistic player wants to play the Iraqi side or the creative player decides to turn to the program's built-in editor in order to modify the scenarios and create more balanced conflicts.)

The built-in editor is versatile enough to allow would-be scenario designers an incredible amount of freedom. It allows the player to create a map, selecting from numerous land types, water passages, roads, towns, fortifications, mines and even smoke. Although there are a few missing pieces (for instance, no four-way road intersections) the map builder is easy to understand and operate.

Once the player has created a new map or decided to go with a map from one of the on-disk scenarios, the next step is to choose the type of vehicles, arms and infantry. The player may choose to import and modify an existing specification or create a new one of his own. The possibilities are only limited by one's imagination. *Brigade Commander*'s unit editor can specify such things as firepower, range, guidance systems and crew training, as well as the unit's morale and initiative. In fact, the *Brigade Commander* editor is, perhaps, the game's strongest feature. It is so versatile that players may spend hours just dreaming up new weapons or entering historical weapon specifications from military data sheets.

When placing units on the map, the player can also decide which hexes to assign a point value to, and which side will own them. This helps to determine the scenario's victory conditions. A scenario with no valued hexes is what this reviewer likes to call a "slaughter." Since each unit is assigned a point value relative to its speed, weaponry and other features, it is the side inflicting the most damage that wins these slaughter contests.

Once all units and values have been assigned, the final steps are to name the scenario, set the time of battle along with the visibility and difficulty levels. Time of battle, of course, has an effect on visibility since a battle fought at 0100 hours would have a lower visibility level than one fought at high noon. Both visibility and difficulty levels can be changed each time the scenario is played.

A final word about the editor is necessary. There is a data field for players to write a summary about the scenario. This summary would show up each time a scenario is loaded and explain the situation. This is great except for one thing. In order to write in that field, one must use a text editor or word processor to create the documentation and then load it into the scenario from the project menu. This certainly seems to complicate what should really be a simple matter.

Dream a Little Dream...

As a child, this reviewer played many wargames, and there never seemed to be enough time between lunch and dinner to complete a game before dear old Mom would ask that all those little game pieces be removed from the table. Worse than that were those times Fido came romping into the room trampling tanks, soldiers and unit markers all over the place. I remember wishing then that there could be some sort of solution to all of that hassle; *Brigade Commander* is close to that solution for Amiga owners. With much of the work taken out of wargaming, along with its real-time movement and its built-in editor, this game is truly a die-hard wargamer's dream. It is, in this reviewer's opinion, destined to become a classic for Amiga computer wargamers. CGW

Technical Briefing

Some players of *Brigade Commander* may have experienced some technical difficulties, from Out Of Memory errors to complete system lock-ups. This reviewer has learned that a revised version of the game was completed recently and is now ready to ship. This new version has corrected the Out of Memory Error and a few other minor bugs. If the reader would like to take advantage or TTR's *free* upgrade program, then all one needs to do is contact TTR directly at: (608) 277-8071 (voice) or (608) 277-8072 (BBS).



Connecting With the Galactic Network

Stellar Conquest *on Delphi*

by Leah Wesolowski

TITLE:	Stellar Conquest
SYSTEM:	Delphi Telecommunications Network
DESIGNER:	Andy Green
	Phone: (800) 695-4005

Imagine a game where players seek to rule the universe by conquering planets, blasting opposing forces to bits and trading with friendly planets to get points and raise cash. Well, it doesn't take much to imagine it, because galactic conquest games have been published since the earliest days of computing. Whether **Avalon Hill**'s *Galaxy* or *Andromeda Conquest* or **Strategic Studies Group**'s *Reach for the Stars*, game designs that allow players to become Ming the Merciless have been a staple for the computer gamer's diet. In **Delphi**'s *Stellar Conquest*, gamers get a second verse that is not *quite* the same as the first, since it features the same type of galactic conquest in an on-line, multi-player setting where one does not have to continually trade the seat in front of the monitor back and forth. Rather, all players have equal access to the program.

Decoding the Basics

The first-time player is at a serious disadvantage when it comes to playing *Stellar Conquest*. The documentation, which must be downloaded, is sketchy at best and players soon discover that all commands must be entered *precisely* to have any effect. Even a typographical error could cost the player valuable time. For example, typing "she*i*lds up" will not turn on the shields. (One way to avoid the typographical nightmare is to use abbreviated commands whenever possible.)

Another example of a typical first-time frustration is learning how to beam things to or from a planet. The documentation simply does not give enough detail for the new player to be successful. To beam up ore from a planet, the player must specify how much ore, the planet's coordinates and the hold number. For example: "BE U 200 OR fr 1, 1 to H 1." means beam up 200 ore from planet located at 1, 1 to hold number one of the player's ship. If the player has deviated in any way from this exact coding, the transfer will not be successful. The above method can also be used to beam armies (AR) or money (QU) by simply replacing the "OR" with the correct prefix.

Another serious disadvantage faced by new players is the fact that they do not begin with de facto allies. *Stellar Conquest* has several teams competing against each other for supreme rule. Those team members get points by destroying ships, making the new and inexperienced players ripe targets. After playing *Stellar Conquest* for a while, the ingenue can ask a team captain to join a team or if a player is *very* good, chances are the captains will ask the player themselves!

Open Communications Channel

One of the most advantageous features of most on-line games is the ability to chat with other players during course of the game. Naturally, *Stellar Conquest* is no exception. If a player wishes to communicate with all of the other players, the player simply precedes each "broadcast" with a comma. This "transmits" the message over the game's "hailing frequency" for everyone to see. To communicate privately with another player, one must be on the same frequency (any "made-up" number) as the player to be communicated with. However, care must be taken to see that the enemy is not eavesdropping (i.e., set to the same made-up number). If opposing players gets the right frequency, the best laid plans of might and Ming may go astray!

Many of the game's 'regulars' are more than willing to help the new player. Neophytes can use the hailing frequency to seek assistance in learning the commands within the game, to ask for help in a battle or just to be friendly.

Beam Me Up, Schwartzkopf!

In *Stellar Conquest*, each planet is classified by a letter. Class 'M' planets (where have we heard this one before?) will grow civilians when ore is placed on them, while class 'F' planets will produce ore at varying rates depending upon their Tech Level. Therefore, one can raise an army by docking at a class 'F' planet, beaming up the planet's ore and transporting the ore to a class 'M' planet. Then, as the civilians "grow," they can be enlisted by typing: ENLIST 10 AR FR 1, 1 (which translates into Enlist 10 armies from the planet located at 1,1). This is important because armies are a necessary commodity for both offense and defense.

Whether one is using the armies to conquer other planets or garrison those already conquered, a further activity is necessary. After one recruits those growing civilian populations, it is necessary to beam up as many armies as the ship will hold in order to transport the new armies to where they will be most effective. Note that while a player's ship can only hold 40 armies initially, players can purchase more holds by docking at a starbase. This, naturally, enables the ship to hold more armies.

In fact, to upgrade any equipment in *Stellar Conquest*, the player must locate a starbase (and have enough Quatloos to make the purchase). That sounds fine, except for one thing. The existing starbases in the game this reviewer entered had already been destroyed by interstellar "Shermans!" No new starbases can be created as the team captains are limited to one per game. Starbases, unfortunately, are very easy to destroy.

Mission Replay

Perhaps highlighting some actual events which occurred during a game of *Stellar Conquest* will best describe the interface and some of the game's anomalies. Specifically, here is a scenario experienced by this reviewer:

A spacecraft, the *Runaround*, is docked above the planet Crue, making repairs and refueling after having fought its way through the planet's defenses. The ship breaks orbit after scanning the surface of the newly conquered planet for anything of value. Finding nothing, the *Runaround* powers up its shields and heads for another planet a mere two light years away.

Photon torpedoes armed, the *Runaround* has ten shots at victory over this new planet. The ship doesn't hesitate as it begins to orbit this new planet, "Shadow." Shields down! Fire, fire, fire! Coming in to complete the conquest are two of the ship's armies who quickly eliminate the planet's defences, thereby making it official. The player has now conquered planet Shadow!

Wait! What's that? The computer screen displays the dreaded words, "Incoming Phaser fire from USS *James* (+1,-2) does 87.43 of damage!"

Quickly, a player must react!

Warp 1, 2... suddenly the computer protests, "But, Sir! We have not broken Orbit!"

Cursing madly the player quickly types: "Shields up. Break. Warp 1, 2; Fire 0, 0; Fire 0, 0; Fire 0, 0." To no avail, however, for as the player was breaking out of orbit, the USS *James* had already fired ten shots at the player's craft. The computer reads, "*Runaround* has been destroyed! Press return to assume command of your ship."



Big Macs in Space

The USS *James* fired ten shots before *Runaround* ever broke orbit. How could that be? The USS *James* has learned the 'Way of the Macro.' With a touch of a key, the player has entered over ten commands before the other player has entered even a single one. The on-line computer processes commands in the order they are received. Therefore, a player can key in macros to fire several times at a given point. If the other player does not have macros — well, let's just say that it is easy for a macroless player to become dead meat.

Besides keying in macros for combat against other ships the player can also utilize them for conquering planets, breaking orbit, powering the shields and enlisting armies. For instance, the player could have the following command string set to one key:

Orbit 1, 1 ({R}eturn) Fire 1, 1 {R} Fire 1, 1 {R} Fire 1, 1 {R} shields down {R} BE D 2 AR TO 1, 1 {R} Shields up {R}. In the above example, the player has orbited, fired three times, toggled the shields and beamed down two armies to the surface of the planet. If all went well, the player has conquered the planet. If not, the player can use the same macro key to enter the sequence once again. If successful the player will receive the message: "*Runaround* (ship's name) has conquered planet Shadow 1,1 (planet's name)!"

Grids in Space

Stellar Conquest, like many space conquest games, is played on a grid and players can scan a small area around their ship to see if there are any planets or other ships nearby. One way to locate another player's ship is to type "Course" and hit return. The computer will respond with the player's location on the grid and another set of numbers in parentheses. Usually the number in parentheses is the location of another player's ship relative to the player's own ship but from the opponent's point of view. So if the player is prompted with "course set to 360,387 (-10, 37)" then the player need only set a course for 10,-37 to move alongside another player's ship. This is not exactly a reliable way to locate other ships as the coordinates given are random ships; often the number given is (0,0), meaning, of course, the player's own ship.

Wanted: Interplanetary Exterminator!

Another obstacle for the new player is all the bugs that still exist in *Stellar Conquest*. Veteran players are relatively immune to the bites of these programming anomalies and use them to their advantage, but new players may simply become frustrated and quit.

One bug situation offers a neat opportunity for boosting one's shields. If one is involved in combat, one need only type: "SH DEC -[number]." That is, "Decrease Shields -1,000." or whatever number chosen — the more negative the number, the higher the shields go *up*. The disadvantage to this is that the player is instantly out of fuel and can no longer fire or Warp. One can still use the thrusters to get around one sector at a time, however.

While the veteran player has adapted well to the game's many bugs, there are some bugs here that even the *best* players hate. For example, upon orbiting a planet, a player can trade with the planet's inhabitants. From the list of goods available for sale a player could choose "Junk." Now, junk sells for zero or sometimes one Quatloo. If the player tries to sell junk to a planet, the game crashes and all the players who were going about their business lose their points for that round, forcing everyone to log back on as if they had not even played that day. Rumor has it that some poor sports have crashed the game on purpose after losing a few battles to other players. There is no reason for "junk" to even *appear* on the list. It is not a needed commodity and only causes problems.

Another nasty bug is what this reviewer calls the "See you later, Alligator" bug. On several occasions, another player, while logging out of *Stellar Conquest*, has taken this reviewer with him. One minute, involved in a heavy battle with Drakken; the next minute, looking at a blank screen. Hmm! Wonder how one gets *that* weapon?

There are *so* many bugs of all types (both friendly and hostile) in this game that this reviewer has not even attempted to cover them all. However, despite the bugs, the game is still playable, even *enjoyable*. In some ways, the bugs even add a bit of intrigue to the game. Still, there is no question that the game would be better without them.

The Verdict

While not perfect, *Stellar Conquest* definitely has something going for it. It could even become "addictive," if some effort were spent in fixing some of the problems. Some suggested improvements would include: the ability to create a new starbase after having the team's original one blown up; being able to communicate with a named player; and giving the teamless player more power. Even so, *Stellar Conquest* is worth playing *now* and could get even better. **cgw**

Circle Reader Service #41 »

THE BATTLE OF GALACTIC EMPIRES



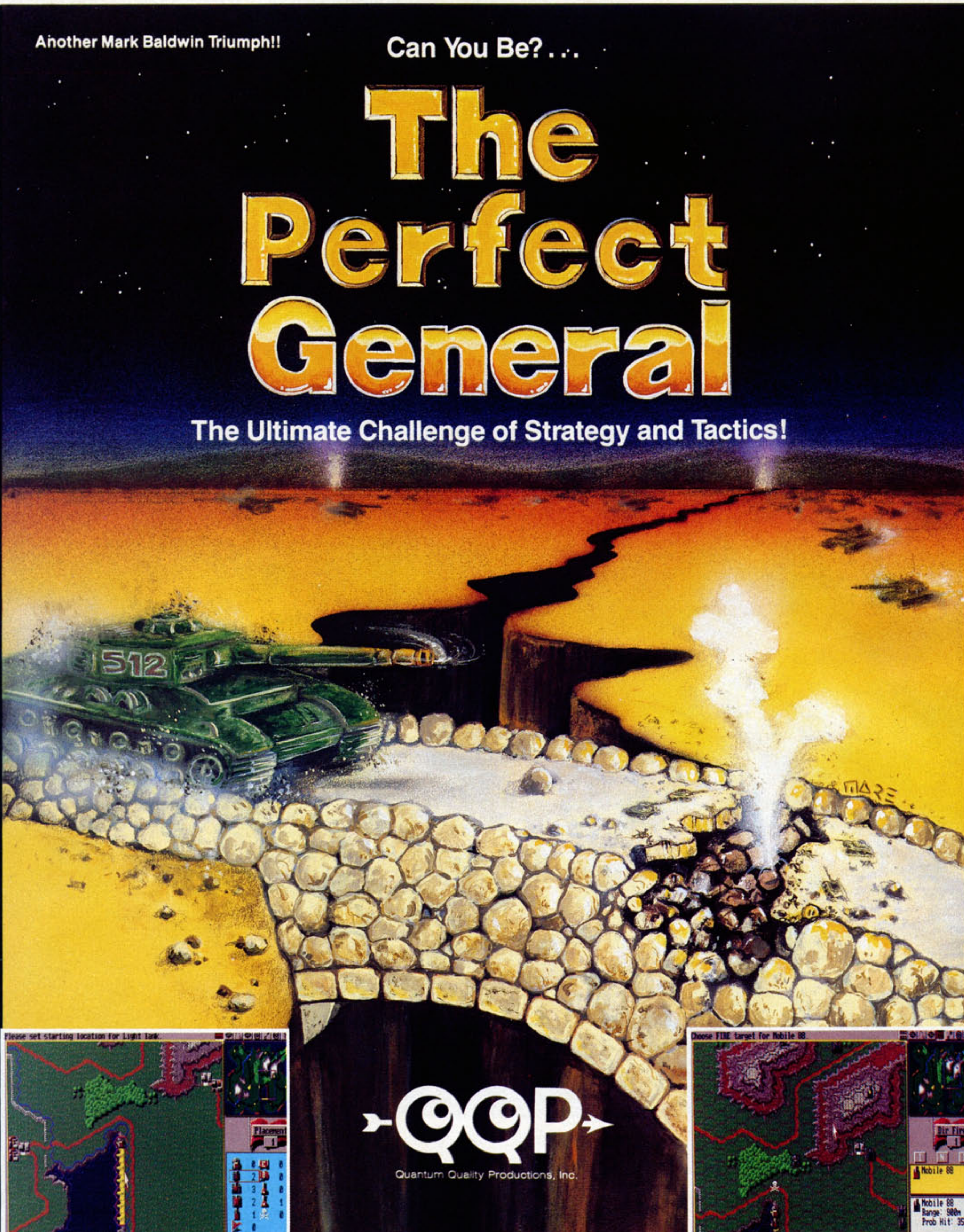
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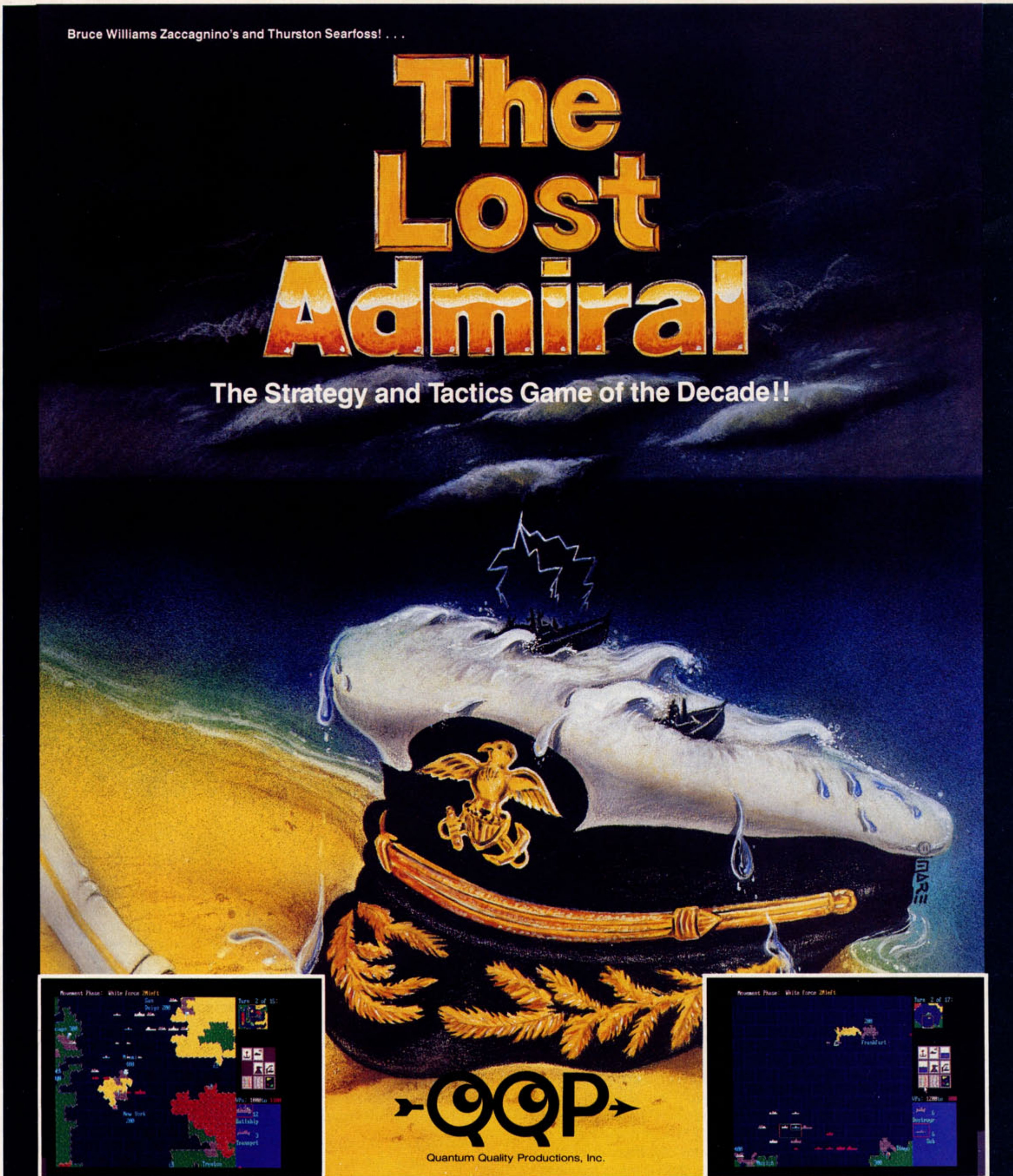
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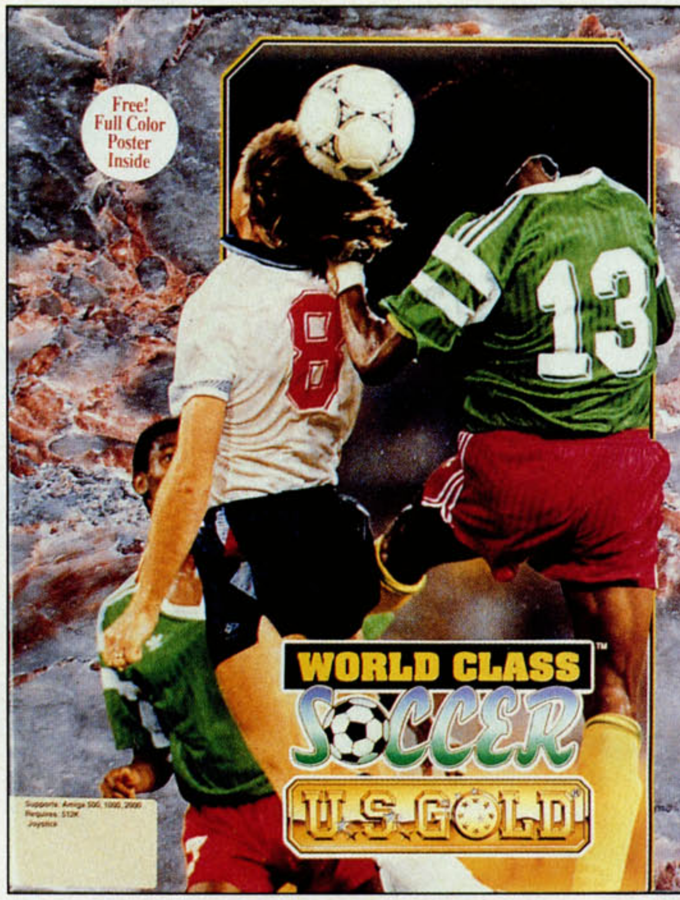


Circle Reader Service #61

Never Give a "Soccer" an Open Break

TITLE:	World Class Soccer
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED:	Amiga
COPY PROTECT:	None
PRICE:	$39.95
PUBLISHER:	U.S. Gold
DISTRIBUTOR:	Accolade San Jose, CA





U.S. Gold's World Class Soccer

by Allen L. Greenberg

Americans visiting outside of the U.S. are constantly struck by the passion with which most countries' populations embrace soccer. Soccer's 1990 World Cup tournament, which took place in Rome, Italy, certainly inspired such passion, and more, when West (as yet non-united) Germany bested Argentina in the final match, seemingly by an application of dramatics in addition to skill.

World Class Soccer recreates that 1990 tournament, right down to the individual athletes. Here is a chance for soccer fanatics to rewrite the 1990 tournament, substituting their own skills for the theatrical tricks and tempers which marked (marred?) the real thing. *World Class Soccer* is a spirited, fast-moving simulation which is viewed from an overhead scrolling point of view. The player may control only one athlete on the screen: the one closest to the ball. Unfortunately, there is no option for switching control to another, more distant team member until the ball approaches him.

Learning the Fundamentals

The game is played using the joystick, two of which are required for a two-player game on the Amiga, while the IBM version requires the second player to use the keyboard.

During play, a flashing arrow indicates which on-screen figure is being manipulated. While the ball is under his control the player may select how hard he wishes to kick it, or he may "chip" the ball off the ground. Once it is in the air, other players may "head" the ball by placing the crania of their on-screen athletes in the right place at the right time.

Tackling, the intimidating repossession of the ball from one athlete by another, can be accomplished in one of several ways. Two players colliding head-on will result in the higher-rated (in terms of the game's statistical base) player gaining possession of the ball. A player may also attempt a sliding tackle in which his athlete throws himself along the ground at an opponent. This maneuver makes for some amusing animation, although it does run the risk of committing a foul.

Foul tackles, of course, result in either a free kick or a penalty. In either case, the action briefly switches to a side view in which the player is able to both aim and control the intensity of the kick. According to the documentation, the player is also supposed to be able to control the direction of a throw-in after the ball goes out of bounds, but this reviewer was unable to do so.

Scheduling a World Cup Replay

Each game takes place within the framework of international competition. One may either select playing a one- or two-player

isolated game or determine a country and enter the 1990 World Cup tournament. In all cases, the player is presented with a list of 24 countries, each of which were represented by one of the high-ranking teams at the 1990 tournament.

Each country's team is rated, role-playing style, according to skill, speed, aggression and strength with a numeric value of one to five. Within each team are 20 players from which 11 must be chosen and assigned positions on the field. Each player is rated in the same categories as the overall team. Speed appears to be most valuable for forward-running attackers, while aggression appears more valuable in defense. Players with higher strength ratings are also able to kick the ball further.

As devotees of soccer well know, there has been a tendency of late to build up a strong line of defense in the field while leaving only a handful of attackers. An interesting innovation included in *World Class Soccer* allows the player to select from a variety of formations which either reflect this trend or oppose it.

Inexplicably, during the one-player isolated games, the player is required not only to choose which computer-controlled team he will play against, but also the computer team's formation, as well as the assignment of each position. Of course, many team managers would love to determine their opposing team's lineup and strategy, but in this case there is a subtle loss of realism. Fortunately, during a tournament, the computer breaks down and selects its own lineup.

World Class Soccer's greatest problems are caused by its limited view of the play-field, only about ten percent of which is displayed at a time. Thus, a long pass becomes a religious experience as the player must pray that somewhere off-screen is a teammate willing and able to receive it. Defense is extremely difficult as the attacker, on whom the display stays fixed, rushes by far too quickly to allow a defender to wake up and react appropriately. Even the poor goalkeeper has only a fraction of a second to move into position.

The solution to this problem is simple and has already appeared in other soccer simulations. A small cut-away "radar" screen, to keep the player informed about the position and movements of other team-members would have improved U.S. Gold's soccer program immeasurably. One might also wish for the ability to "bend" the ball, or otherwise put some spin on it when shooting or passing.

World Class Soccer does contain some wonderful animation which features players who dive, slide and tackle in meticulous detail. The music is inept, but the sound effects are quite adequate. Players will also enjoy the game's witty and informative manual. *Caution:* do not attempt to frame the "free" poster included in the package; the program's loading instructions are cleverly hidden on the reverse side.

In 1994, the United States will host Soccer's World Cup tournament. With the exception of those who harbor a McCarthy-esque paranoia that pro football might be in danger of being supplanted, **U.S. Gold**'s *World Class Soccer* should prove an informative and reasonably entertaining way to prepare for the event. **CGW**

Circle Reader Service #26

Conversions Received



Blockout (Electronic Arts) Sega Genesis

PGA Tour Golf (Electronic Arts) Macintosh

Action Stations (Internecine) Amiga

Blitzkrieg: Battle at the Ardennes (Internecine) IBM

White Death (Internecine) IBM

Worlds at War (Internecine) IBM

SimCity Graphic Sets 1 and 2 (Maxis) Macintosh

King's Bounty (New World Computing) Amiga

F29 Retaliator (Ocean) IBM

Harpoon Scenario Editor (Three-Sixty Pacific) Macintosh

Harpoon Battleset #3: The Med (Three-Sixty Pacific) Macintosh

Reader Input Device #86

On the R.I.D. card provided toward the front of the magazine, please rate the following games (only if you have played them!) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (i.e. A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. As with the world of education, the scale will translate to:

A = Excellent
B = Above Average
C = Average
D = Below Average
F = Failure

If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Demographics

(List the appropriate number)

1. What is your age (in years)?

2. What machine(s) do you play games on?

(List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in descending order of use).

1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
2 = Amiga
3 = Apple 8 bit
4 = Apple IIgs
5 = Atari ST
6 = Atari 8 bit
7 = C-64/128
8 = Macintosh
9 = Other (specify)

3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?

1 = Less than 2 hours
2 = 2-5 hours
3 = 6-10 hours
4 = 11-20 hours
5 = 21-30 hours
6 = 31+ hours

4. How much does a *Computer Gaming World* review influence your computer game buying decisions? (Rate this on a 0 - 9 scale, with 0 being none at all and 9 being "I absolutely swear by *CGW* reviews."

Games

5. Bane of the Cosmic Forge (Sir-Tech)
6. M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse)
7. Ultima VI (Origin)
8. Harpoon (Three-Sixty Pacific)
9. SimCity (Maxis)
10. Warlords (SSG)
11. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
12. Red Baron (Dynamix)
13. Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse)
14. Wing Commander (Origin)
15. Flight Simulator 4.0 (Microsoft)
16. Martian Dreams (Origin)
17. Rise of the Dragon (Sierra)
18. Conflict: Middle East (SSI)
19. Space Quest IV (Sierra)
20. Knights of the Sky (MicroProse)
21. Elite Plus (MicroProse)
22. Where in America's Past is Carmen Sandiego? (Broderbund)
23. Heart of China (Sierra)
24. Armor Alley (Three-Sixty Pacific)
25. Midwinter (MicroProse)
26. Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge (Electronic Arts)
27. Lemmings (Psygnosis)
28. The Gold Sheet Pro Football Analyst (Villa Crespo)
29. Shanghai II (Activision)
30. Personal Pro (MicroLeague)
31. Modem Wars (Electronic Arts)
32. Castles (Interplay)
33. Chuck Yeager's Air Combat (Electronic Arts)
34. Gold of the Aztecs (U.S. Gold)
35. Flight of the Intruder (Spectrum HoloByte)
36. Fireteam 2200 (SimSystems)
37. The Terminator (Bethesda Softworks)
38. Life & Death II: The Brain (Software Toolworks)

Articles

39. Third Reich Preview
40. NHL Hockey Preview

Circle Reader Service #80 »

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“I Am For Peace: But When I

Mark Baldwin's The Perfect

by Alan

The nice thing about war as a game is that nobody really gets hurt and it's all just an exhilarating mental exercise. Still, *The Perfect General* makes no pretense of playing up the "game" half of the word "wargame." The subject is surely war but, in the words of Chris (*Balance of Power*) Crawford, "The game is the thing." With an emphasis on playability, *The Perfect General*, like *Stratego*, *Risk!* or *Axis & Allies*, serves as a great primer for strategic thought and makes every man a beginner. The clear thinking required to position one's tanks on a hill and infantry in the trees and towns, while tucking one's artillery safely in the rear does not require a West Point graduate. The value of these lessons will be taught over and over again, however, to those who take the time to try their hand at *The Perfect General*.

"I'd like to see the government get out of war altogether and leave the whole field to private industry." —Joseph Heller

In *The Perfect General*, players "buy" their initial forces for the scenario chosen from those available and deploy them within their "at start" areas of the mapboard. Once deployed, the game commences with a largely "I do my phase, then you do yours" sequence of play each turn.

One might agree with Mr. Heller after looking around *The Perfect General*. From the sharp EGA/VGA graphic user interface to the basics of the map and pieces, this game has the look and "feel" of a quality production. Although the battles are all set-piece, abstract affairs (albeit of remarkable strategic challenge), the terrain looks as nice as any strategist could hope for.

Abstracted, too, are the unit types (light, medium and heavy tanks, armored cars, "bazooka" infantry, etc.) and their symbols (varying sizes of tanks, beaker-shaped artillery units and infantry "flags"), but the diehard wargamer can easily slip into "suspended disbelief" and enjoy the purer, chess-like strategy elements of *The Perfect General*. While the terrain and weather (which is fixed on specific turns by scenario) effects are handled in a manner that is clear and realistic to anyone (particularly seasoned strategy gamers), the interaction of units in combat and the arrival of new units is often times more a "gameplay" element with nary a nod to "historical" accuracy.

"Name me an emperor who was ever struck by a cannonball." —Charles V (1500-1588).

Initially, both players plot any artillery fire for their mobile artillery units (notorious for their wildly scattering shots and inability to "barrage" a hex and keep it interdicted throughout the turn). Next, the artillery fire rains down with great destructive force, marking the ground and altering the terrain for the remainder of the game. When the smoke clears, both players will plot their artillery fire (for the *next* turn) from their light and heavy artillery pieces, the difference between the two being their respective ranges and the effectiveness of their barrages.

Next, the "attacker" in the scenario (always the red player) fires his units. Then the "defender" fires his units. When fired upon, some units will have the opportunity to return fire, should their commanders so desire and manage to hit the "F" key fast enough (the time delay for this decision can be adjusted). After this first direct-fire phase, there are movement phases for both players where they can move all of their desired units along the hex grid map (although by merely selecting a destination for a unit, the computer will cause it to take the quickest, most direct route so that tediously moving each piece hex-by-hex is avoided). During a player's movement, the enemy may interrupt it (again, by hitting the "F" key) to take a "passing fire"





shot at the currently moving unit. Units may attempt to overrun enemy units during movement simply by moving into their hexagon, but this can be a very risky proposition. Following movement is another round of direct fire, then a new turn commences with any reinforcements being brought on for both sides.

"You can't say civilization don't advance... in every war they kill you a new way." —Will Rogers (1879-1935)

Wargames, too, advance and there are new ways about *them* as well. *The Perfect General*, for example, uses either a simple one-key keyboard interface for almost every game element, which supplements the joystick- or mouse-driven input a player might prefer. Mastery of *The Perfect General*'s interface takes little time

Speak, They Are For War."

—Psalms 120:7

General *from New Player QQP*

Emrich





away from diving into one's first melee and is easily retained once learned. An important principle of war is "simplicity" and that principle was well applied to the user interface.

"The executioner is, I hear, very expert, and my neck is very slender." —Anne Boleyn (1507?-1536)

There are many ways to die, but wargames usually only focus on single methods. In *The Perfect General*, one gets to toggle through a multitude of choices at the beginning of the game. The choices are many and will alter the very nature of each and every scenario. The first choice is whether to play a single scenario as either the attacker or defender or to play one game of a "campaign" on a given side. Next, players may either opt for the standard length scenario or play the long game (with an increase in starting build points from which to purchase one's initial forces). Some other minor modifications include adjusting the game delay speed (for reaction fire during the enemy's portions of the turn) and allowing enemy units to be hidden or not (i.e., limited in view to realistic "lines of sight").

"The graveyards are full of indispensable men." —Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970)

Two major game elements can be selected which will determine how much like a chess game or traditional hex wargame *The Perfect General* will play. One toggle is the "always hit/random hit" button. The "always hit" option means that a shot capable of hitting a target will always hit it, while a random hit has a realistic chance of hitting based on range and terrain considerations. The second toggle is the "full kill/partial kill" button (remember Anne Boleyn's neck?). A full kill means that any hit will kill a unit, while a partial kill means that a hit *damages* a unit, which then may or may not kill it. Thus, a game with "always hit/full kill" becomes a chess-like game of cat and mouse, with a completely different flavor than a traditional wargame based on "random hit/partial kill" which is full of probability calculations and hope in chance. In war, the balance of losses (or "attrition") often determines the outcome of the battle. How those losses will be accrued determines the nature of every game of *The Perfect General*. One thing quickly becomes apparent when considering battle casualties: every man is indispensable.

"When the flag is flying, all reason is in the trumpet." —Ukrainian saying

Glorification of war is *not* a feature of *The Perfect General*. While the maps are done artfully enough to impress any computer cartographer, they concentrate on the basic elements of strategic terrain. When surveying the maps, players can opt to toggle several useful features. The victory points awarded each town are particularly good to know, because every scenario focuses on sole control of towns and objectives for winning. Casualties never count for "winning" and "losing." City names, lines of sight, artillery targets and even the board hexgrid can be toggled on or off. These toggles are a remarkable bit of easy information accessing.

The look of the battlefield also changes as the simulated conflict evolves. The smoking ruins of shattered vehicles and other troop formations linger, constantly reminding players of the ugly costs of war. The pock marks from artillery fire remain, along with any landscape they've scarred, be it field, forest or town. These artillery devastated areas actually become a new terrain type for the game's duration.

While the sound support wasn't completely finished in the version we had to play with, what was there (heard on a SoundBlaster) was terrific. No *Pas de charge* ever sounded, but the hollow thumps of artillery, the shrill whistle of the shells and the rumble of their impact all left a chilling impression. The clanking of armor and sounds of closely fought battles in overrun also add a nice dimension to the complete enjoyment of the game. All in all, it's a very well-done package for the audio-visually oriented computer gamer.

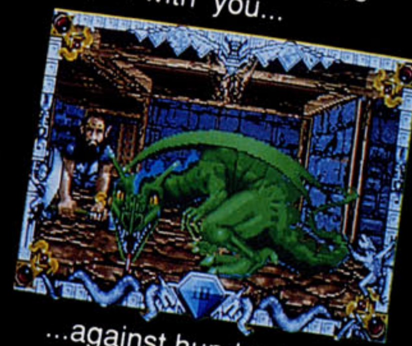
"A good man is always a beginner." —Martial (ca. 40-ca. 104)

A player's call to action in *The Perfect General* comes from the plethora of scenarios. Many "primer" scenarios are offered for wargame neophytes in general, as well as novices to *The Perfect General* in specific. Each gradually builds upon the lessons from the pre-





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vious one, adding more units available and creating other challenging tactical situations. Every scenario offers the player a reference to the mapboard to be played upon (they are unique in each scenario), a description of the situation, plus some general advice on strategy for winning.

The later scenarios are quite involved and challenging. Some offer a number of invasion sites to choose from for initial unit placement and many offer "neutral" countries whose forces will join the other side if their integrity is violated. A couple of "history-based" (as opposed to "historical") scenarios are provided; one for Patton's race to Bastogne in December of 1944 and another for Monty's push from El Alamein in 1942. While still highly abstracted, one does get a feel for the history of the battles presented.

Of some promise is the "scenario disk" push button icon on the scenario selection screen. This makes it apparent that, if successful, this game will see supplemental scenario disks down the road somewhere, keeping the game ever fresh and new. Unfortunately, there is no "design your own" feature for building custom scenarios or changing unit values (as there are in many of the **SSG** wargames with their Warplan and Warpaint features). This, unfortunately, leaves players at the publisher's mercy in terms of future product support.

"Defeat is worse than death because you have to live with defeat." —Bill Musselman

One of the nice features of *The Perfect General* is the debriefing at the end of each game. Players are awarded a military "rank" based on their performance in the preceding battle. As an interesting tribute to "social consciousness," artillery efficiency and "collateral damage" are also measured. Hmm... better recycle those fallen trees and broken tanks, general.

After the scenario debriefing, the game is logged into the game's annals. Histories are recorded, not only for individual players (including computer players!), but also for each scenario as to how the attacking and defending sides have cumulatively fared. Thus, not only can a player evaluate one battle, but entire careers and campaign histories! Several interesting details are presented and make for a fascinating study. What an outstanding "throw away" feature for a wargame!

« Circle Reader Service #55

"I made all my generals out of mud." —Napoleon (attributed)

Connoisseurs can "feel" the caring that goes into the area of their expertise. This reviewer strives to be a connoisseur of wargames and it is clear to him that much time, caring and refining went into the game that eventually became *The Perfect General*. Clearly, the mention in the advertisement stating "this game is based on a twelve-year-old tournament series..." rings true. The game systems are based in simplicity, the scenarios are obviously well evolved and the mechanics of play are quite clean. For those who remember the "golden age" of board wargaming in the 1960s and 1970s, *The Perfect General* brings the memories flooding back and one can envision the miniatures version of this game upon which years of playtesting were performed.

It is one thing to design a wargame, it is an even greater challenge to develop it. This is even more important in a computer wargame, with all of the technical aspects inherent in that medium. Enter Mark (*Empire*) Baldwin. He has been adding many touches to the evolution of *The Perfect General* based on his experiences and theories of better wargame design. With Mark's strong influences in visuals and interfaces, added to an already solid game backed by years of playtesting, one has a rare formula that combines to make a quality computer wargaming product. What more could the computer wargamer of the '90s want?

"The book of Military Administration says: 'As the voice cannot be heard in battle, drums and bells are used. As troops cannot see each other clearly in battle, flags and banners are used.'" —Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

There is also a time when players cannot be heard in battle, and that is when they play by modem. *The Perfect General* supports modem game play. While the most popular modem wargame on the market today (*Command HQ*) virtually requires a modem for its constant, real-time action, *The Perfect General* is a much more turn-sequence-oriented game which little lends itself to modem play. While one's opponent is purchasing units or plotting artillery, a player must sit and wait patiently. One cannot even chit-chat with the opponent to kill the time, for doing so completely stops the other player's ability to conduct his phase by the appearance of an intrusive dialogue box (whereas in *Command HQ*, a separate "chat line" is given that doesn't interrupt the other player's ability to keep playing).

"I hope you have kept the enemy always in the picture. War-books so often leave them out." —T. E. Lawrence ("of Arabia," 1888-1935) in a letter to Archibald Wavell, 2/9/28.

Even during the fire and movement phases, where a player can interrupt the action by pressing the "F" key to fire upon the enemy, this opportunity to interact occurs sporadically at best. So, the game is ideal for the player who likes to ponder his moves, but is rather annoying to generals who are addicted to a more real-time (i.e. crisis-centered) environment. The modem feature is nice, and quite welcome. Wargamers who have always longed for opponents will find them as near as the telephone, and we hope that such a feature as "modemability" becomes an industry standard. Still, there's something a bit clunky about the way it is coming along in *The Perfect General*.

"In war there is no substitute for victory." —Douglas MacArthur in a speech to a joint meeting of Congress, 4/19/51.

In the "lingo" of the strategy gaming genre, this quote becomes: "In wargames, there is no substitute for victory conditions." This begs the question, is *The Perfect General* the "perfect wargame?" It isn't. Neither does it pretentiously try to be. Instead, *Can You Be The Perfect General?* purports to be an engrossing strategy game, centered on a theme of tactical armored warfare in the mid-20th century. It is that, plus all it claims to be: well-tested, thought-provoking and ideal for play sessions where replay value is more important than realism. Those seeking the *Kampfgruppe* of the 1990s *will* be disappointed. For those of us who look back on the "kinder, gentler" wargames of yesteryear, we will find playing *The Perfect General* as comfortable as wearing those torn, faded blue jeans, our oldest pair of tennis shoes and a five-year old flannel shirt. Pass the potato chips, please.... **cgw**

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Scorpion's Tale

Warning: Although "The Scorpion's Tale" is a warm and comfortable tavern of the mind with a nice cozy fire of vibrant images, our resident storyteller conjures up illuminating hints about games. If the gentle reader eschews hints, let him beware!

At last, we seem to be reaching the end of summer. Fred's back from the Grues Convention, and the cool autumn winds are only a few weeks away. This is the time of year a lot of folks take their vacations. How about you? Wondering where to go? Well, I hear that the Far East is a pretty interesting place.

Heart Of China is **Dynamix**'s new adventure game, straight from the pages of the old pulp magazines. Set in and around the China of 1930, it's a cinematic romp with captures, escapes, derring-do and maybe even a little romance.

Conversation plays a big part in this game. There's a lot of dialogue, and choosing the right (or wrong) response is as much a puzzle as anything else. You can make things easier or harder for yourself, depending on how you talk to the people you meet.

The interface is simple. In fact, it's pretty much the same as the one in *Rise of The Dragon*. Everything is icon-driven using the mouse; no typing on the keyboard is necessary.

So you're Lucky Jake Masters, running a two-bit air service out of Hong Kong. Jake is an ex-World War I ace, who never tires of recounting his exploits to anyone who happens to be around. He's brash, a little arrogant, somewhat boastful, but underneath he has, of course, the proverbial heart of gold. He's rather like Han Solo in *Star Wars*.

Jake's not doing too well. In fact, he's up to his ears in debt. Come to think of it, he's not only in debt, but out of business, too. E.A. Lomax, his major creditor, just foreclosed on the service. Not for the money; E.A. has ulterior motives.

E.A.'s daughter has just been kidnapped by a Chinese warlord. Kate Lomax is no spoiled child of wealth. Spurning high society, she trained as a nurse and went into the remote interior to do good works among the natives. She's definitely not your typical "Little Miss Moneybags" (kinda reminds you a little of Princess Leia, doesn't it?).

Anyway, Li Deng has Kate, and ransom isn't what's on his mind. So E.A. needs a hero type to rescue her, and Jake is volunteered. To sweeten the deal, Lomax kicks in a $100,000 reward for safe retrieval... with a catch. Every day that passes, twenty grand goes down the drain. It's an incentive for Jake to move fast. Jake decides to move fast.

His first move is to hook up with a ninja(!) named Chi. Not the easiest guy to find; for some strange reason, the locals are reluctant to talk about him. Can't imagine why. But with a little persistence, Jake eventually meets up with this remarkable person. After giving Chi a solid reason to help, all Jake has to do is convince him to get into an airplane.

Chi (smart man!) has doubts about flying. He doesn't really believe in airplanes, when you get right down to it. Jake needs to give him a sensational visual demonstration on aerodynamic principles. With that accomplished, and maybe a little shopping trip first, it's off to Cheng-du to rescue Kate!

The fortress is, of course, heavily guarded, and it's not open to tourists today. A certain amount of brainwork is necessary to get in. Well, there's always the front door. Sometimes the best way is the boldest way, for the right person. Then again, maybe sneaking in from the rear is better. Whichever, Jake better make up his mind soon.

Once inside, the first thing Jake notices is all the guards strolling around. What a nuisance! Life (not to mention the rescue) would be so much easier if all these troublemakers had something else to keep them busy. Perhaps Jake can come up with a hot idea for this situation.

With the guards occupied elsewhere, it's a snap to grab Kate and take off. As soon as Jake deals with the two poisonous snakes, that is. Nasty little things. I don't recommend the barehanded approach for this problem. Premature death is such a downer.

Hey, Jake is almost done, and he can practically feel those Lomax bucks in his pocket already. These rescue jobs aren't so hard after all, huh? So what if hundreds of bloodthirsty guards are on your tail? Just pop into the tank and get going.

This is the fun part. If you're not into arcade stuff in adventure games, why, you just say you want to skip it and win... and you do! Sure makes life easier on the nerves, not to mention reflexes. On the other hand, if you're the type who wants a bit of challenge, go right ahead and shoot 'em up!

Circle Reader Service #23 »


THE TERMINATOR
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The cult movie phenomenon batters its way into your home in the most relentless arcade/adventure game of all time! From the nightmare world of the future to the mean streets of Los Angeles, "The Terminator" takes you right to the very edge. . .then pushes you over!
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Whew! Safely at the *Yankee Eagle* at last! Now a quick flight back to Hong Kong, drop off the lady, pick up the money and... and there's just this tiny little problem. Seems Jake wasn't quite fast enough when he took out the snakes. Kate was nipped and now she's in serious trouble, like slowly dying from the poison.

Not to worry. Chi knows all about this stuff, and says there's a cure. In Kathmandu, Tibet. That's right, Tibet. It's the one and only place Kate can get fixed up. Forget about Hong Kong and quick cash; a detour is in order here.

So the *Yankee Eagle* goes soaring over the Himalayas, and naturally runs out of fuel at just the wrong moment. Well, I guess they didn't have such big gas tanks in those days. Anyway, Jake wasn't fooling when he claimed to be an ace. He brings the plane down without a crackup, but it goes into a long skid, stopping (where else?) at the very edge of a deep chasm.

After hastily debarking from the plane, the trio finds itself in the middle of nowhere. It's freezing, it's snowing and Kate don't look too good. Someone's gonna have to go for help, while the other stays behind to tend to Kate. Which one? Ah, that's the question.

Tricky situation here. Who goes and who stays is pretty important, 'cause if Kate bites the big one, it's all over. So keeping her alive is number one priority. That means whoever remains with her, better know what he's doing (hint hint). And don't forget to look in the plane, too.

Rescued (at the last minute, of course) by villagers from Kathmandu, Jake discovers his troubles aren't over. He and Chi can't move the plane back by themselves, and the villagers aren't too interested in that kind of work. Especially since their lives are being made difficult by Bojon, the local strongman. Looks like Jake and Chi are gonna have to foment a little revolution here. A hero's work is never done.

If it were to be done, it's best done quickly. Chi casually mentions that a storm is coming, and that will push the Eagle right over the edge of the chasm. There's no time for dawdling here. A quick tour of the village (there's not much to see), a visit or two to the wise lama (is there any other kind?) and a chat with some locals in the neighborhood bar are all in order. Don't forget to look in on Kate somewhere along the way, too. And remember, this is be kind to kids week.





Things are looking rosy now. The Bojon's been kicked out, Kate is all healed up, the plane is safe and it even has some fuel. But Li Deng (remember him?) has made Hong Kong too hot for a return trip, so another destination is in order. Paris sounds about right.

It's a long jaunt, but Jake figures he can stop off in Istanbul and fill up. Shouldn't take long. Quick stopover, nothing more. Suuuuuuure. Like, did Jake think the Nabob would forget about that little escapade with his daughter, the last time Jake was in town?

These guys have long memories and they still remember Jake all too well. In no time at all, our boy is in big trouble. Very big trouble. Now it's up to Kate to get him out of it. That's gonna cost some money, and American dollars aren't legal tender in this part of the world.

Seems like Kate will have to do a bit of gambling if she wants to break our hero out of prison. The shell game is tricky, but fair. Just keep your eye on the shells, and ignore the conversation. Save before you start, restore if you lose, and save if you win. Keep it up until you've cleaned the guy out.

Now that she has a little spending cash, Kate can do the grand tour and see what's for sale. Probably not a lot, in a place like this, but a little something from here and a little something from there all adds up to a way of getting Jake out of his current predicament.

The crazy lady under the cell window isn't at all interested in money (thereby proving she *is* nuts!), and it's not likely that Kate can purchase anything she wants. However, a fruitful experience can be of help here. So can the crazy lady.

With Jake sprung, it's a wild ride to the airport, with the Nabob's men in hot pursuit. Li Deng has his agents around, too (another man with a long memory). There's the *Yankee Eagle* and... BOOOOM! There *was* the *Yankee Eagle*. Looks like it just blew up. Looks like poor Chi got blown up, too.

No time for tears now. The bad guys are closing in! Quick! Off to the Orient Express (good thing it's heading to Paris)! Ah, a little breathing room at last, and time for a little romance, too.

This is the big scene for the romance between Jake and Kate. Are they gonna hit it off or not? Here's where we find out. You even get the chance to do it as either Jake or Kate (choosing the dialogue and responses).

Whichever, and whichever way it goes, after the hearts and flowers comes the Big Fight Scene. Yep, one of Li Deng's agents made it onto the train. Jake will just have to punch out his lights. This is another arcade sequence and, like the one with the tank, you can skip it and win if you prefer. Perhaps not as satisfying as doing it the hard way, but at least you can't lose!

Finally, Paris! And there's E.A. himself waiting at the train station. What happens next? Will Jake and Kate get hitched, or will our hero just collect his cash and head out again for the wild blue yonder? Hey, that's up to you, and how you played the sweetheart stuff as the game progressed. There's more than one ending possible here!

Looks like that wraps things up for now. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi, visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie, stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

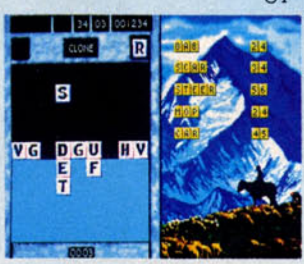
Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**



Another Eastern block falls.

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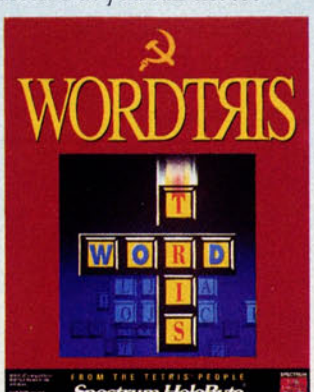
Go for XYLOPHONE if you dare.

Create words horizontally or vertically, but don't put all your E's in one BASKET. Because every time a word lines up, *poof!* those letters disappear, and the blocks below pop up to fill the spaces. So whenever you earn points you stir up the alphabet soup. And suddenly that falling M has no HOME to go to.

WORDTRIS keeps raining vowels and consonants until you've collected enough words to move to the next level, or the well fills up. Of course, each successive round ups the ante as the blocks fall ever faster. But you can choose your difficulty level to match your skills, and select from single player, cooperative, competitive, head-to-head or tournament modes. The built-in 30,000 word dictionary verifies even the most obscure word.

Set the difficulty level at 10 and you'll find WORDTRIS harder to keep up with than the changes in Eastern Europe.

WORDTRIS. Another great game from the TETRIS people.



Available for IBM and Mac/MacII.

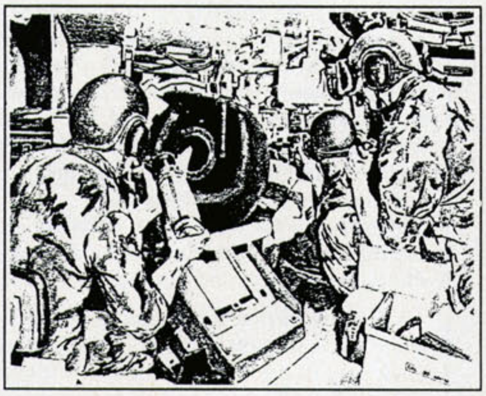
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Circle Reader Service #69

Tank School 101

by Dana L. Cadman



The U.S. Army has been playing games for five years now. (Hold your tongues, ye wags and cynics!) Five years ago, the U.S. Army began using the *Simulation Network* (*SimNet*) to train soldiers in armored combat. *SimNet* is a combination of tank, personnel carrier and helicopter simulators, a communications network and a protocol that allows one simulator, or several simulators hundreds of miles apart, to participate in a training scenario. This allows crews to practice gunnery proficiency and platoon-, company- and battalion-size operations from the controlled environment of the laboratory.

Now, three games for the personal computer, *Abrams Battle Tank*, *M1 Tank Platoon* and *Tank*, bring some of this excitement to the home. This article will provide a brief comparison of all three commercially available software packages with unclassified information about the military's network. Because of the nature of his employment, the present author could write more, but then he would have to kill 85,000+ readers (wicked grin).

By the Books

The documentation for *Abrams Battle Tank* includes several pages of statistics about Soviet and American armored vehicles and a few sentences about each vehicle. The manual also offers some tactical advice about how to correctly deploy the tank.

Even if the game itself were a dog, *M1 Tank Platoon* would be worth the price just for the manual. There are three pages of information about the M1A1 and 41 pages describing the tactics and design theories of armored vehicles. This information is followed by 46 pages describing the weapons and organization of NATO and Warsaw Pact land forces. Both sections are entertaining and useful in developing strategies for winning the game.

Tank's manual is equally impressive. Most of the information about the M1 comes from learning the game controls, but the manual includes 20 pages of information about U.S. and Soviet equipment. The six pages of tactical help ranges from choosing platoon formation to leading the gun. There is also a section on the history of tanks and armored warfare. *Tank* is the only game that comes with a videotape covering these same topics.

SimNet comes with several volumes of instructions and six weeks of military classroom training. *[Ed: Not available in any retail store!]*

From Recruit to Cadet

Abrams Battle Tank wastes no time getting the player onto the battlefield. The player can choose from eight scenarios, ranging from easy to hectic in degree of difficulty. Once the player has practiced on these he can choose to enter the campaign, a random arrangement of the eight scenarios.

M-1 Tank Platoon offers training sessions with both stationary and moving targets. All sessions take place on the Narfenauer Range in West Germany, the same range used every other summer for the CAT (Canadian Army Trophy) Shoot competition. These exercises allow the player to become familiar with the controls *before* actually entering combat. The player can also adjust the battlesight range and the values in the ballistic computer. A prohibitively expensive add-on to *SimNet* is the only other "game" that lets the user set the values in the ballistic computer.

Tank also offers stationary and moving target sessions at the Fort Knox ranges, giving the operator the same familiarization opportunities as *Tank Platoon*. *Tank* goes one step further by letting the operator practice combined arms missions with artillery, AA support and CAS (Close Air Support).

SimNet, of course, allows military trainees to practice gunnery at Fort Knox, Narfenauer, Fort Rutger or any other location that can be mapped by a satellite.

All five games tested include the ability to generate smoke for camouflage, even though there is no visual effect for the smoke grenades in *SimNet* as of yet.

Buttoning Up

All five games include intuitive, easy-to-use controls. *Tank* was particularly easy to use, since many of the driver's controls are the same ones used in some *SimNet* stations. This is, of course, understandable since **Spectrum HoloByte** subcontracted some of the software work on *SimNet*.

The three PC games use the function keys to change views from inside the tank. *Tank* was the only game to offer multiple outside views. *M-1 Tank Platoon* and *Tank* use detailed renderings of the tank controls to convey information to the operator; switches move and lights change as keys are pressed to operate controls. *Abrams Battle Tank* is more menu-driven and conveys changes to the operator through generically designed controls.

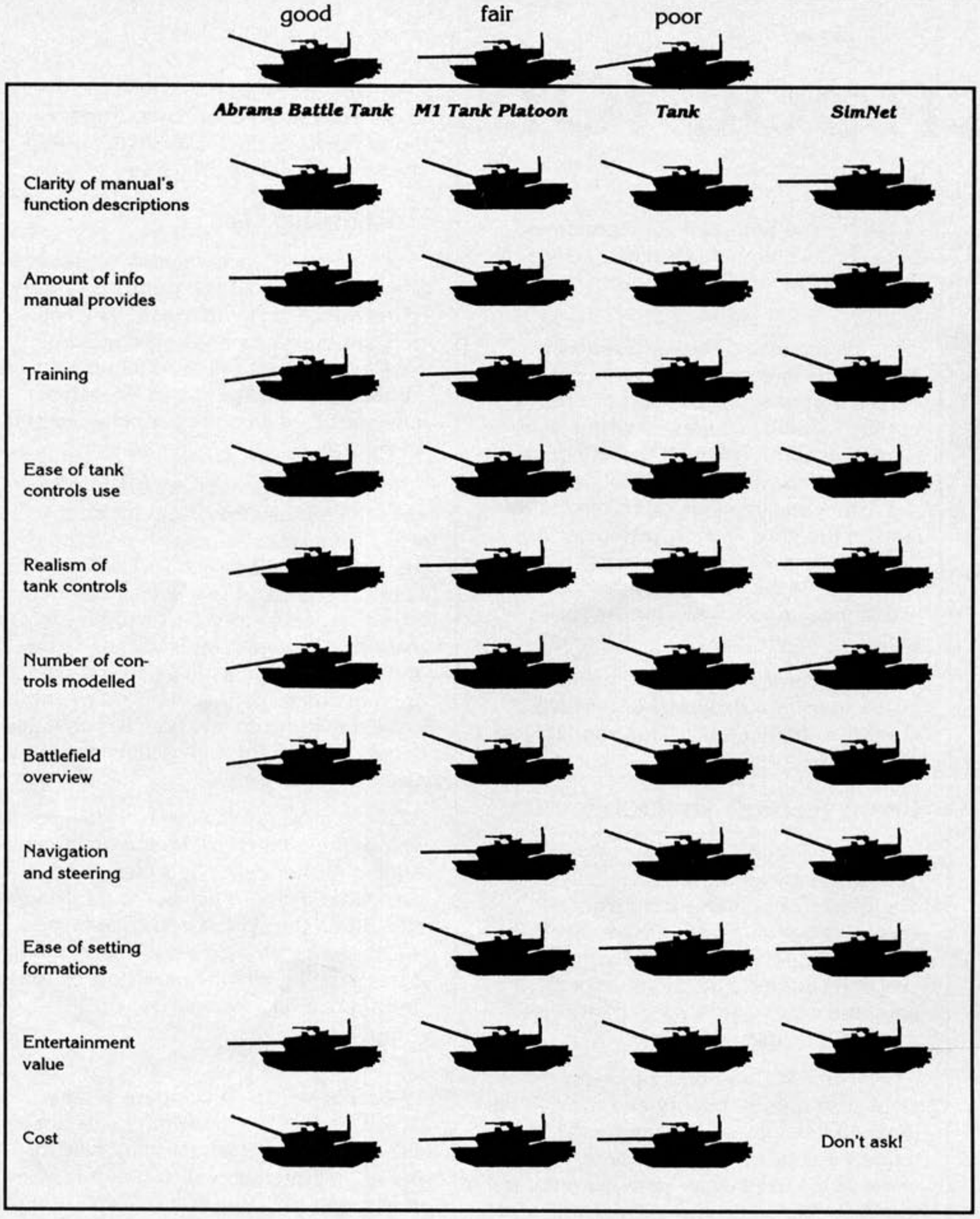
Only *SimNet* allows the commander, as well as the gunner, to fire the main gun. Adding further depth, it is also the only game that includes actual M1 hardware and allows the operator to experience maintenance problems such as throwing a track during a high-speed turn on loose ground or along slopes.

"Platoon, Ho!"

Abrams Battle Tank operates as a lone vehicle. The opposing forces appear to be randomly placed and friendly forces do not interact with the M1A1, other than to get in the way of targets. *Tank* operates within the context of a platoon, but does not allow the player to command any tanks other than his own.

M-1 Tank Platoon allows for the independent operation of four tanks and randomly chosen support vehicle groups. Vehicles can also be placed in several regulation formations. Command can be switched to any tank at any time. The battle can be viewed from any position in any of the four tanks, along with an aerial view of the battlefield.

SimNet, in its present iteration, allows the battle to be viewed from the tank, an aerial view, a stealth vehicle that does not participate in combat, the nose of an M830 HEAT round or just about any place one cares to park himself during combat. Unlike the home games, *SimNet* allows multiple views of the battle, from multiple monitors, simultaneously.



Tanktics

For the individual tank there are two tactics:
1. Keep your front to the enemy.
2. Keep moving.

Tank armor is *not* uniformly distributed. Sixty to seventy percent of a tank's armor is in the front where it will protect the crew from the most powerful hits. Side armor is thinner and will protect against glancing shots and most soldier-fired anti-tank weapons, but it will not hold up against a straight-on shot from another tank. A tank's back armor will protect the crew from shrapnel and rifle fire, but that's about it.

That is why it is wise to keep the main gun over the front deck. Turning the turret 180 degrees means that the crew in the turret is safe while enemy fire enters the engine exhaust grill to take out the engine (unwise) or the driver is protected from enemy fire while the rest of the crew is using the ammunition in the back of the turret to hide behind (even more unwise).

A moving target is harder to hit than a stationary one. The Abrams in all of the games under consideration come with stabilized gun systems that allow them to shoot on the move. Most Soviet equipment is incapable of doing the same, so they are either sitting targets when firing, or they are non-threats while they maneuver into position.

The only time when sitting still is good is when cover is available. Hiding behind hilltops, stone fences, etc., essentially adds armor to the tank as any enemy fire must first penetrate the sod, stone, etc. to reach the tank. Cover also reduces the tank's silhouette, making the tank a more difficult target to acquire (much less damage).

Tank formations are important and must be adjusted to the situation. Placing tanks in a line abreast behind a hill is good since the entire platoon has cover and the ability to fire. Marching across an open field in that formation still gives all platoon members a chance to shoot, but all of them can also be shot at. A diamond or wedge formation may hinder the fire opportunities of the rear tanks, but they can hide in the smoke generated by the lead tanks, reducing the number of tanks that can be shot at during terrain-crossing maneuvers.

A column formation is seldom used, since the lead tank is the only one with a clear field of fire. Nevertheless, this formation is useful for road marches and crossing bridges. Leaving tanks spread out during river crossings will cause the tank on the bridge to easily cross the river while the other tanks fall behind, breaking up the formation. Staying in formation encourages soldiers with anti-tank guided weapons (ATGWs) to stay down, rather than pop up and take a shot at that thin rear armor of the platoon.

Another instance when breaking up a formation is good policy occurs when ample cover is available. One platoon, or a pair of tanks, can move ahead while another group provides covering fire. Once the first group is in place, it can provide covering fire as the second group moves past the first. This prevents the entire group from being exposed at once.

Pass in Review

All of the games are well-written and entertaining. *SimNet*, of course, offers the most excitement, realism and variety, but the three PC games do not require three people to operate all of the controls. The PC games are also much more affordable. *Tank* offers the best tank controls and most realistic mission set-ups of the three games, while *M1 Tank Platoon* is the easiest to operate in the aerial view mode. *Abrams Battle Tank* is easiest to learn and provides more entertainment for those whose tastes lean more toward arcade games than chess.

Actually, the only thing really missing from any of these games is probably the spine-jarring wrench of crossing hills at 30 mph (a blessed omission). Come to think of it, the entertainment software publishers do an extremely good job of reducing the *work* of armored warfare into the *thrill* of simulated combat. **cgw**

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ADVENT. / ROLE PLAY

PAST

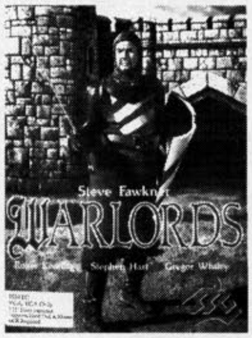
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FUTURE

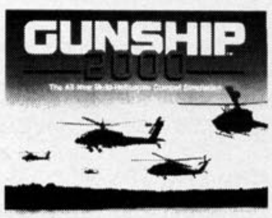
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Panzer Battles (SSG)	27	-
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Secret Weapons Luft.	**44**	-
Silent Service 2 (MICROPR)	34	-
Storm Across Europe (SSI)	39	-
Their Finest Hour (LUCAS)	39	19
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Imperium (E.A.)	28	28
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F-14 Tomcat (ACTIVISION)	28	-
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F-15 II Desert Storm Disk	21	-
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Circle Reader Service #78

Chrome Fever

Street Rod II: The Next Generation

Mike Weksler



TITLE:	Street Rod II: The Next Generation
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PRICE:	$39.95
COPY PROTECT:	Document Check
DESIGNERS:	Andrez Canoe, Andrzej Micialkiewics, Wojteck Was
PUBLISHER:	California Dreams
DISTRIBUTOR:	Electronic Arts Distribution

The term "hot rod," when used among avid computer gamers, invokes images of ominous tower cases stuffed with "big block" 486 mother boards, math co-processors, two-digit RAM and monster hard disks with ultra-high access time. To others, however, the term "hot rod" means something else. It reminds us of the days when cars rolling off the lines in Detroit were called "muscle cars." They had engines that were measured in cubic inches, high compression ratios and burned gas by the bucketful. Cars like the Camaro, the Charger, the Corvette, the GTO, the Chevell and the Mustang were already fast in their stock configuration, but they could really fly with just the right modifications. For a lot of us (in our younger days), life revolved around taking an older muscle car and restoring it to its former glory (with a few modifications), hanging out at the burger joint, cruising town and drag racing at the local "underground" strip on the outskirts of town.

Cruisin'

Street Rod II: The Next Generation allows the player to relive his high school days of building a bitchin' set of wheels and then racing anyone who has eight cylinders under his hood. Like its big brother *Street Rod*, *Street Rod II: The Next Generation* is about spending the summer building a hot rod out of a junker and then taking on all comers. This time around, the player is transported to the summer of 1969. Perhaps due to inflation, one starts off with more money — 1,200 bucks. Again, the goal is to shut down the "King of the Road" and scam his betty, but there are some noticeable improvements.

Buy 'em, Build 'em, Race 'em

In addition to selecting from some late '60s muscle cars such as the Charger, the Corvette, the GTO, the Chevell and the Shelby Fastback, among others, one can also select more parts than in *Street Rod*. For example, after enough "racin' for pinks," this reviewer was able to purchase a '68 'Vette, and drop in — among other goodies — a GMC blower, 4:11 Posi rear end and headers, which resulted in a top speed of 122 MPH! In order to install the exhaust system and swap the rear-end gears, one now has the ability to work under the car. Once the player's "hot rod" is built, he should cruise for some gas at the "Cheapskate" gas station, then go hang out at the "Burger Bungalow" and check out the competition while trollin' for betties.

Blowin' Doors

The racing has also been improved with the addition of two new places to race: the L.A. aqueduct, and the legendary Mulholland Drive. The aqueduct is particularly challenging in that one must drive up the embankments to avoid obstacles. This form of racing didn't prove to be as lucrative for this reviewer as the drag racing on the regular strip, but it was highly entertaining. Mulholland Drive is also quite a challenge — veer off the road and the player will wind up going "over the edge" (both literally and figuratively).

Of course, on Wednesday evenings, anyone worth his pink slip who can scrape up thirty bucks can participate in "Grudge Night" at the local drag strip. The player sets a "breakout" time at the local raceway and then takes on other racers trying to win without going under his "breakout" time. Winning "Grudge Night" will definitely help the player's bank account and the "King" will be around the "Burger Bungalow" more often.

Under the Hood

As would be expected, the graphics and sound have been upgraded in the new version. The only thing that the player can do with the engine, however (besides adding parts), is to adjust the timing. Although there are newer graphics for doing this, it would have been nice to be able to do more, such as swap a cam, adjust the lifters, add timing gears, swap pistons to change the compression ratio, tinker with a carburetor or, at the very least, change the oil and oil filter. Parents take note: for some reason, small children seem to go nuts over the car construction set and, since they can click on so many cool things, it is as much of a distraction for them as it is for "the big kids."

Crossing the Finish Line

Although there are more cars and parts to select, build and race, the process of building a car is unchanged from the original *Street Rod*, in which the player reads through the classifieds, selects cars and parts, and then returns back to his garage to get his hands greasy. The user interface is also unchanged, which may cause some to perceive *Street Rod II: The Next Generation* as a case of "more of the same." The product makes up for this, however, with the new racing features previously mentioned. After several hours of reliving "hot rod" memories, the player may end up cruisin' down to his old hangouts on a Wednesday night. He'll most likely see a new generation of cars lined up at the local burger joint with hoods open, chrome glistening and terms like "four bolt main" and "camelback heads" floating in the air. The player may also be surprised to see fresh rubber streaking the pavement at the old drag strip, but if he doesn't, he can always come home and fire up *Street Rod II: The Next Generation*! **CGW**

Circle Reader Service #66 »

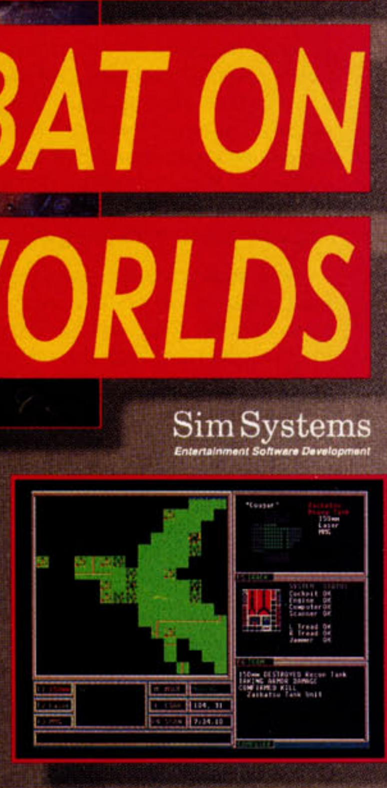


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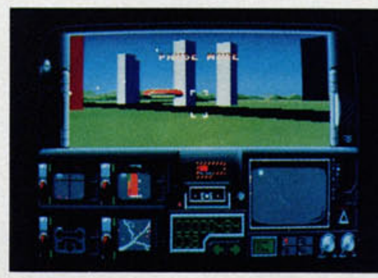
Accolade's Hoverforce

by David M. Wilson

TITLE:	Hoverforce
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
COPY PROTECT:	Code Wheel
REVIEWED:	Amiga
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Paul Carruthers and Ian Downend
PUBLISHER:	Accolade San Jose, California

In today's world, there seems to be plenty of discussion about the so-called "war on drugs." Some say victory could be won if law enforcement were able to get considerably tougher, while others pronounce the battle against substance abuse as a "no-win" situation. **Accolade**'s *Hoverforce* portrays a grim future of ongoing drug wars in a new hybrid action/simulation game.

Hoverforce is set against the backdrop of MetaCity in the year AD 2050. A new narcotic, "Aftershock," is being distributed throughout the city. Aftershock is extremely destructive to the brain, in that it tears down all barriers of right and wrong and causes its victims (users) to become mindless killers, loyal only to the druglords, their suppliers. Sheriff Stone has formed the "Red Wasp Unit" as a special task force specifically commissioned to battle the druglords and rid the city of their pervasive influence. The unit's main weapon in their fight is the assault hovercraft, the Hoverkill 1000.



Once strapped into the seat of the Hoverkill 1000, the player begins a series of twelve search-and-destroy missions. His goal is, literally, to blow away everything in sight. Apparently, MetaCity has no innocent civilians on its streets, so the pilot is free to blast *everything* with his series of weapons. This was certainly an oversight on the part of the designers. Who are the interdiction officers protecting if there are no civilians? This oversight detracted from the realism of the game and belied its simulation "feel."

The simulation atmosphere, by the way, comes from the use of three-dimensional polygon-filled graphics, standard to driving and flying simulations. They do serve to give the game a true three-dimensional "feel," but pure action gamers are likely to complain that they lack that certain elegance and beauty.



Twisted Arms

The only weapon in the player's initial allotment is a "Belly-pumping " machine gun. Hoverkill pilots quickly discover the need to upgrade weaponry. This aspect of the game, while necessary, detracts from the realism of the game. Players pick up canisters of cash and drugs for evidence and then fly to the nearest "store" and purchase weapons. It is hard to imagine a police officer in hot pursuit of a criminal taking the time to stop at the local munitions store. The idea is absurd. The game could have been designed so that the officers would return to the station for weapons upgrade. Utilizing the cash and drug canisters as a basis for determining if the player has earned the weapons upgrade is fine, but buying the weapons at a store is ridiculous!

The weapons available are machine guns, pulse cannons and laser-guided slide missiles, and there are three different models of each weapon. Pilots will need the more expensive weaponry as they progress because the enemies get tougher. Fortunately, each successive purchase lowers the upgrade price for the next model so that, for example, a pilot who has bought the least expensive cannon will not have to pay the full purchase price on the other two models.

The Hovercraft comes equipped with radar for tracking enemies (everybody is an enemy in this game, but this is especially helpful for knowing when an enemy ship has managed to sneak behind the good guy's ship), a directional indicator (a simple arrow which points the direction of the druglord or nearest store location depending on which the player is seeking) and a shield indicator.

Also, even though it is not part of the ship's equipment *per se*,

the player is treated to the druglord's reaction to his operations. When the player has the upper hand, the druglord's features appear with a grimace. When he feels that he is winning the battle, he appears with a joyful grin! This is an attractive way to help the player judge his or her effectiveness in the game.

Occasionally, enemy fire will shut down part of the Hoverkill's systems. Enemy fire has a devastating effect on the vehicle's shield systems. Direct hits can also terminate shield indicators, radar, and directional indicators. Naturally, these items must be replaced at the nearest store out of the evidence money that the officer has appropriated.

Drug Traffic Court

The game offers a multitude of enemies. The easiest to defeat are the "zombie drug slaves," which resemble robots. These are easy targets, easily blasted into oblivion by even the lowest level machine-gun. The "drug traffic controllers" are also easy to defeat. They are important because they allow the enemies to be alerted to the player's location. The "cruisers" are an interesting innovation in that they split into two parts when shot leaving the player to battle two enemies rather than one. The "mech spiders" serve as intriguing enemies. These ground-based creations walk right up to your hovercraft and begin doing damage. Using the pulse cannon at close range seems to be the best defense against them.

By far the most vicious opponents are the sleek black saucers driven by the druglord's bodyguards. These maneuver quickly, are difficult to track and seem to have the best shielding. The druglord himself is invincible (as though Miranda were still in effect) until the required amount of evidence for the current level is collected. Then he is destroyed with little effort.

One of the most amazing things about all the firepower flying through the skies is that the buildings seem to take no damage whatsoever. Players can bombard the buildings to their heart's content, but no destruction will be evident.

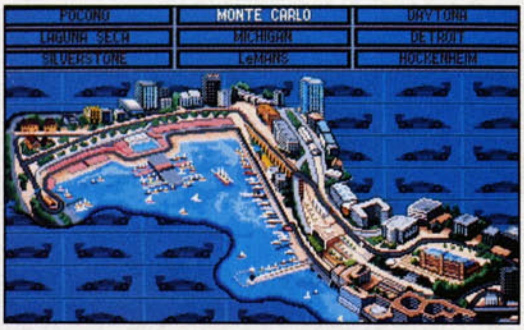
Players looking for a challenging game may discover that *Hoverforce* is just such a game. Saving after each level is highly recommended. Then after the player reaches one of the higher levels, it will be both interesting and useful to go back and replay the game from the beginning. After gaining additional experience, gameplay will seem much simpler and the player will be able to collect more cash and evidence on the first few levels than was possible during the first "tour of duty." This allows an earlier weapons upgrade and will better prepare the player for upper level play.

Another trick that proves helpful in this game is to use the function keys to fire the weapons. On upper-level play, pilots will want to fire their missiles rapidly and the mouse controls are not quite as efficient as simply using the keyboard. F1 activates machine gun mode, F2 selects cannons, and F3 powers up the missiles. Repeatedly punching the proper function key for the desired weapon seems to be the equivalent of auto-fire for this game.

Hoverforce has its weaknesses, but the game offers players just what is promised. It is a real whiz-bang shoot-'em-up! There is enough destruction to please even the most violent player. Players who are seeking a fast-paced, *challenging* arcade action game are invited to join Sheriff Stone's squad of Future Narcs.
CGW

Supercharged Simulation

Electronic Arts' Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge





Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge proves several points. It shows that the player does not have to have control of all of the elements of a simulation in order to get a realistic sense of the vehicle being simulated. It demonstrates that each of three different styles of racing has its own strategies, dangers and thrills. It proves that a game can still require significant thought, even if the controls are simple (accelerate, decelerate, turn left, turn right or go straight). Finally, it demonstrates that **Distinctive Software, Inc.**, the developers who masterfully constructed *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge*, still cannot write a joystick routine that satisfies driving aficionados.

In short, *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* puts the *T* in torque, the *S* in speed and the *C* in competition without forcing the player to learn the mechanics of the cars (as in *Ferrari Formula I* or *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation*). This time, the program emphasizes Performance with a capital *P*—for *power*! The game allows players to graduate from the tracks of six different types of motor sports and uses a semi-role-playing career track to mark the player's progress. Following Mario's career track is like starring in every racing movie ever made. Along the way, Mario guides and occasionally prods the player toward excellence.

There are six different types of racing in the game. Each has distinctive race courses, types of qualifying and race lengths which are, in turn, true to the type of racing being simulated. In sprint cars and modifieds, one must qualify for the main event via preliminary races called "heats," just as a driver would in actual competition. Stock cars, prototypes, Indianapolis cars and Formula One racing have no "heats," so the player qualifies by time trials. It is a satisfying way to advance the player from the "minor leagues" of racing to the "majors."

Racing in History

Ascot Park in Gardena, California no longer exists. Like many of the classic sports shrines of the past, it too fell to the wrecking ball to make way for new development. Yet, Ascot was the springboard for Parnelli Jones, Mario and others to reach sponsorship at higher levels of competition. In *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge*, players can challenge Mario at Ascot and other famous sprint racing tracks. The physical model underlying the simulation is fairly vivid in the sprint car segment of the game as players learn to skid around turns and make use of every inch of the track in order to keep up the pace.

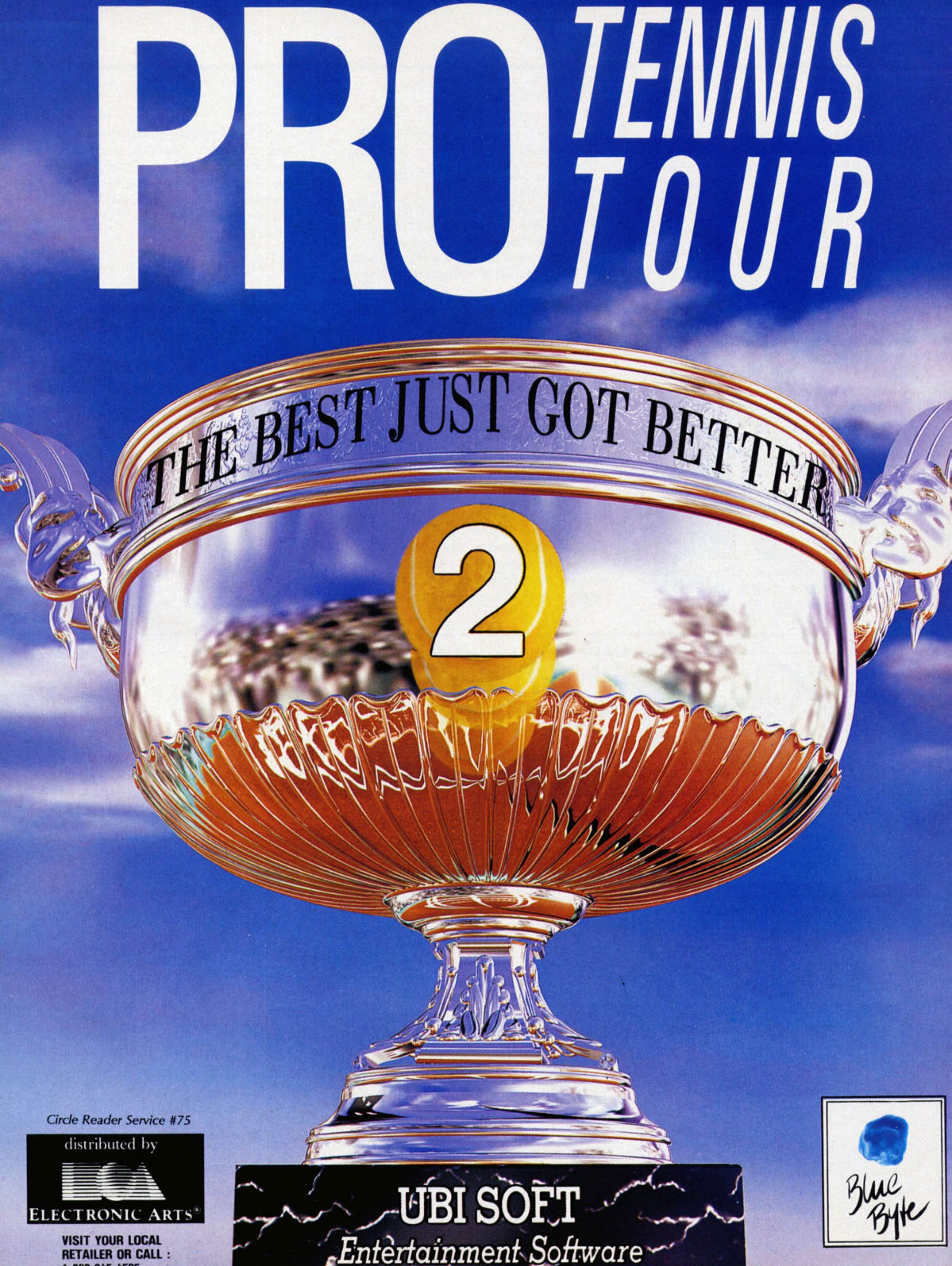
Ascot Park is also where the player begins to get the feel for how the damage model works in the game. Although the results of skidding one's tires are not immediately visible on the dirt track — excessive skidding lowers one's top speed rather quickly on paved tracks! — the result of "rubbing" (the metaphor used by Robert Duvall's character to describe bumping another car or the track wall in *Days of Thunder*) is to lower the top speed rather quickly.

At Ascot, the damage model is relatively forgiving, since the straightaways are short and one cannot easily reach the car's actual top speed, anyway. This reviewer often went full bore at Ascot, rubbing the walls on every turn and not worrying about the damage. He was aware, however, of the fact that the loss in top speed was occurring and made sure that he did *not* drive the same way in sprint races with longer straightaways. Since the game automatically fixes one's car to 100% after each race (without charging the player's earnings), this was no problem. One would think that such a driver might lose his sponsor pretty quickly if he pulled such a reckless stunt in real life, but it is impossible to simulate everything in a computer game.

Driving at Daytona

After one has won sufficient funds to upgrade his vehicle, he can move on to modifieds (or, if he has earned enough money, on to stock cars). Modifieds give the player a wider car to work with and force him to race over some of the same tracks as he raced on the sprint car circuit. Since the top speeds are higher and the cars wider, this is an opportunity for the player to learn how to hold a tight line in the corners and maneuver in close quarters, lessons which will be vital in the final four types of racing. These are frustrating lessons to learn, however, and the present reviewer was very excited when he was able to move on to stock cars.

Stock cars, after all, are as American as apple pie. Good ol' boys and buxom babes gather around the largely oval temples of high-speed endurance rituals and watch the warrior priests of automotive performance dance their ceremony


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of life and death around the track. From the first time this reviewer felt his car hurled out of the high-speed curves of Daytona, he was absolutely hooked on *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge*. It became obvious that a player had to hold the right line in a curve or would lose all of his 200+ miles per hour of speed (and even risk smashing into the outside walls of the curve).

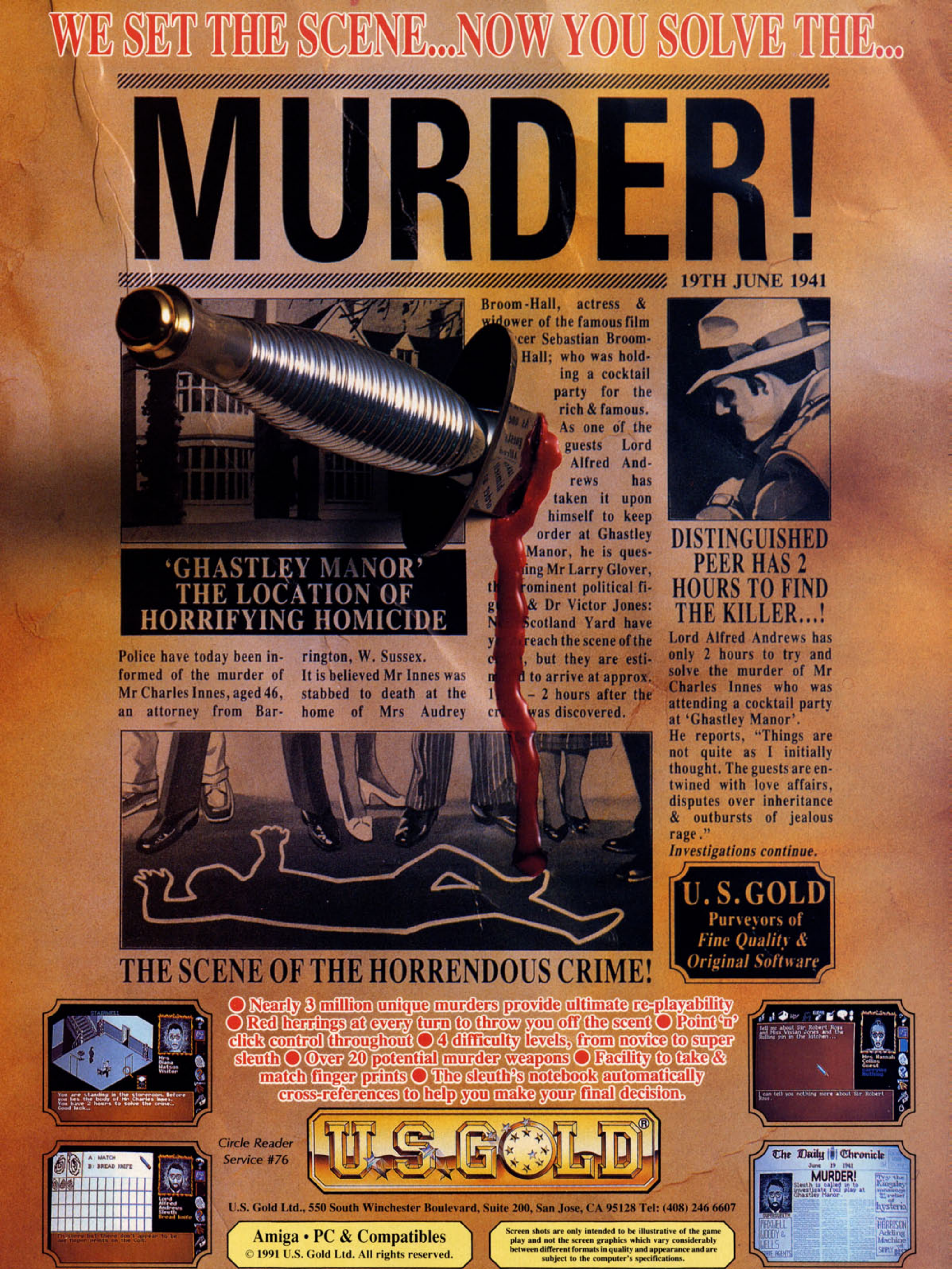
Yet, there were still new challenges to be introduced when the player actually began racing on the stock car circuit. More than in the earlier competitions, one gets the sense that the artificial opponents (the other drivers) in the stock car races are *smart*. Drafting (getting behind another car so that one does not have the same amount of wind resistance as the car in front and can be pulled by the lead car until one is ready to make his move) is *very* important in the stock car races. One can lead the race for several laps and think that he is headed for a pole-to-pole victory. Suddenly, a good ol' boy drafts the player for a lap or so and makes his move. One will wonder where that car got all the extra speed. Of course, the player's own wind draft gave it to him. So the player will have to do the same thing on a later lap.

Also, the stock car circuit introduces more lengthy races to the mix. This means that having a pit stop strategy for refueling and possibly changing tires is absolutely vital. As noted earlier, the damage model takes off a bit of speed for all the rubber the player is leaving on the track. So it is a good idea to put new rubber on the car when making major pit stops. This reviewer usually fudges one lap past the suggested pit stop ("Mario" suggests the appropriate lap at the beginning of the race). This is because the artificial opponents all pit on the suggested lap and pit row is crowded (just like it is during a yellow flag lap of a real race), making it very possible to have a race-ending collision on pit row. (Astute readers will wonder how the reviewer knows this — sensitive readers will not ask.)

By the time players reach the Indianapolis circuit and the Formula I circuit, pit stops are an even more vital part of the race strategy. Each new circuit becomes more harrowing until one is finally ready for the endurance tests of Formula I with its serpentine routes of passage. Players quickly learn that speed is not necessarily the key to winning. Although speed can cover a multitude of evils in the early circuits, driving skill is what wins at the higher levels. This is how it should be.

Winner's Circle

Although one may miss the ability to "set up" the race car that served as a vital part of **Electronic Arts**'s earlier racing games and **Distinctive Software, Inc.**'s *Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge* for **Konami** and one may miss the capacity to perform goofy maneuvers like turning around and driving against the traffic (found in *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation*), *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* still green-flags adrenalin for the action addict and intricate nuances for the knowledgeable enthusiast. It is the first time aficionados have been able to "feel" the difference in six different types of racing. *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* proves once and for all that it takes more than engine noise and track layouts to make a computer game seem like a real race. **CGW**


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MURDER!
19TH JUNE 1941
'GHASTLEY MANOR' THE LOCATION OF HORRIFYING HOMICIDE
Police have today been informed of the murder of Mr Charles Innes, aged 46, an attorney from Barrington, W. Sussex. It is believed Mr Innes was stabbed to death at the home of Mrs Audrey Broom-Hall, actress & widower of the famous film ...cer Sebastian Broom-Hall; who was holding a cocktail party for the rich & famous. As one of the guests Lord Alfred Andrews has taken it upon himself to keep order at Ghastley Manor, he is ques...ing Mr Larry Glover, th... rominent political fi... & Dr Victor Jones: N... Scotland Yard have y... reach the scene of the c..., but they are estim... d to arrive at approx. 1... – 2 hours after the cr... was discovered.
DISTINGUISHED PEER HAS 2 HOURS TO FIND THE KILLER...!
Lord Alfred Andrews has only 2 hours to try and solve the murder of Mr Charles Innes who was attending a cocktail party at 'Ghastley Manor'.
He reports, "Things are not quite as I initially thought. The guests are entwined with love affairs, disputes over inheritance & outbursts of jealous rage."
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Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the game play and not the screen graphics which vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computer's specifications.
The Daily Chronicle
MURDER!

Pre-Game Report:

EA's NHL Hockey *Worthy of Overtime!*

by Wyatt Lee

In professional hockey, overtime is only welcome when one's team manages to come from behind to tie the score in the last few seconds of regulation play. When hockey fans play *NHL Hockey* (the latest **Sega** cartridge from **Electronic Arts**), however, they will be begging for the chance to play longer and longer, whether it means playing sudden death overtimes or simply scheduling more games. The play mechanics, graphic effects, sound bites and number of options are enough to make true hockey fans purchase a Sega system just to play this game. It is, quite simply, enough of a quality product to "put the lie" to anyone who says a 16-bit cartridge game cannot compete with a 16-bit floppy disk-based computer game. This one takes traditional computer games into the Stanley Cup final.

NHL Hockey is a *player*'s game. It does not try to compete with *Wayne Gretzky Hockey 2* on the "coach only" or "play and coach" level. After all, *WGH2* does an excellent job of allowing the player to see complete plays developing via its overhead view of the rink and its *Hockey League Simulator* allows players to perform either "quick and dirty" statistical replays of full NHL or customized league seasons, seasons based on full-fledged *Wayne Gretzy Hockey 2* game results or a combination of the two types of game resolutions to simulate a full season.

Yet many action gamers, in particular, felt that *WGH2* offered a pristine perspective, far from the board-crashing, bone-crunching power game of hockey. They felt that it needed more direct involvement from the player. Now, *NHL Hockey* features animated figures that look more human than those in *WGH2* and allows players to participate more directly in face-offs and fights. It offers plenty of action for gamers who like to control the skating, passing, shooting and fighting themselves, but it also offers a statistical base which factors into the on-ice action. In other words, a wizard at handling the Sega controller may think he can skate and stick handle past a defender, but his speed and puck handling rating will come into play. An excellent action gamer may get off more shots on goal than his opponent, but how accurate those shots are will depend on the on-screen players' actual statistics (Note: The license granted to *NHL Hockey* by the National Hockey League allows EA to use real team names, but the player's association has not approved the use of player names. Nevertheless, real hockey fans will recognize that the players on



each team perform with remarkable faithfulness to the players on actual NHL teams).

Opening Period (Game Mechanics)

Play begins with a typical menu where players can select which team they wish to control against the computer, whether two human players will control a given team together as teammates or whether the humans will face off head to head with two different teams (or even, with the magic of the computer, the same team). Players can also decide whether to play three different lengths of periods, use the game's capacity to change lines when the ones on the ice become fatigued or have the game "call" almost all penalties, no penalties except offsides or no penalties. This is also where the player can choose to play any NHL team (including the Campbell and Wales Conference All Stars or the newest expansion team, the San Jose Sharks).

Once all the choices are in place, a checklist allows players to view the roster positions of both team and note where any mismatches might occur during the course of the game. Then it's face-off time!

The face-off in *NHL Hockey* is interesting. A large pop-up window shows enlarged versions of the two players taking the draw and the linesman ready to drop the puck. Players can adjust their controller to direct the pass to a teammate and try to time the animated drop of the puck by pressing the "B" button on the controller to actually pass the puck.

The Sega controller is particularly well-suited to this kind of game. The directional wheel allows one to determine skating, shooting and passing direction, the "B" button tells the active player to pass the puck and the "C" button tells the active player to shoot the puck. On defense, the "A" button allows the active player to attempt to hold his opponent, the "B" button forces the player closest to the puck to become the active defender and the "C" button tries to poke check the puck away from the offensive skater. In fight sequences, the directional wheel determines whether the player is advancing into or retreating from a fight. (In fact, it seemed to us like the player who retreats from a fight is most likely to get a penalty for *instigating* the fight.) The "B" button provides for a short, quick punch and the "C" button calls for a long, straight knock-out punch. The fight scenes are extremely well-executed in graphics, and they contain easy-to-use fight mechanics.

Between Periods (Tactical Tips)

On defense, always remember that the game features true physical momentum (i.e., if the players are skating one direction, they cannot suddenly travel in the opposite direction until they expend the force from the direction they are travelling). This means that one can move the controller so that his on-screen skaters are all moving in the direction of the active player. Then, if he presses the "B" button each time one of his players nears the offensive player, he is likely to get several high-speed collisions. If he is lucky, one of those collisions should force the puck loose. Even if the offensive player retains control of the puck, however, just the threat of collisions is usually enough to cause the puck handler to slow down and cause his teammates to go offside.

On offense, one should rarely send his puck handler deep into the slot (right in front of the goal). The goalies in *NHL Hockey* are awesome in fending off

breakaway and rebound shots (too awesome). The *best* way to beat a goalie in *NHL Hockey* is to put one's best offensive player high in the slot and wait until either one of his teammates or one of the opposing team members is screening the goalie. That is a real trade secret for *NHL Hockey* aficionados.

Game Misconduct (Problems)

Even a game with the championship qualities of *NHL Hockey* commits some flagrant fouls from time to time and this game is no exception. *NHL Hockey*, at least in the pre-release version we looked at, does not know what to do with a two-line pass. So, if a player has a fast enough line on the ice to pass the puck into the offensive zone and can touch up the puck before the defensive players get to it, the program will allow one to get away with a violation (and it becomes a good offensive strategy for those who are not purists). Fortunately, the game will "call" an icing violation if the defensive player manages to touch the puck before an offensive player can.

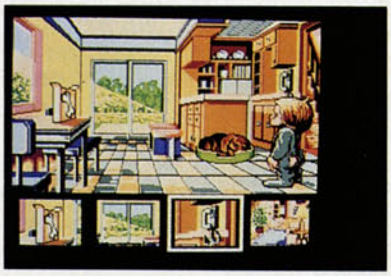


Second, the two players as teammates option seems somewhat lacking. Even when this reviewer was trying to pass the puck to his human teammate, the program seemed to seek out some non-controlled on-ice athlete to pass the puck to. This meant that the reviewer ended up controlling the *new* active player and his human teammate was left circling in the slot to no avail.

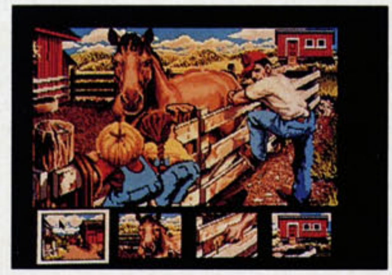
Finally, the program simply handles penalties in a binary fashion. Where real-life referees get reputations for "evening up" penalties or "letting the players decide the game," *NHL Hockey*'s referee calls a penalty, even when the penalty box is packed to the gills. Again, this feature may be changed when the published version comes out, but it is somewhat disconcerting nonetheless.

Shooting From the Point (Conclusions)

NHL Hockey is so true to the flavor of hockey from a player's perspective that it caused *CGW*'s editor to acquire a Sega Genesis for his home *primarily* to play *NHL Hockey*. Naturally, this astounded all of us reviewers, since our ham-handed arbiter of critical thought has expressed his personal bias against dedicated game machines often and loudly in the past. So, if he has the audacity to cut out this embarrassing personal reference, this reviewer will slash him repeatedly with a *real* hockey stick. If he can't stand the cold, he needs to get out of the ice rink. The fact is, no one who loves hockey should miss this championship effort. Now, if there were only a cure for Sega controller thumb, all would be right in the universe, eh! **cgw**







McGee's World (McGee Times Three)

by Deborah Muldawer

TITLES:	McGee, Katie's Farm, McGee at the Fun Fair
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Apple IIGS, Macintosh, IBM/Tandy
PRICE:	$39.95
DESIGNER:	Lawrence Productions, Inc. Galesburg, MI

With an angelic smile on his face, the toddler McGee joyfully explores his world. Many possibilities await McGee in the *McGee* trilogy. He can wake up his mother, buy hot dogs, feed chickens or simply romp outside. The possibilities are numerous. Assisted by a mouse or track ball, the non-reading child can choose one of four panels at the bottom of the screen. Although either tool can be used, younger children may prefer the more easily maneuvered track ball. With a simple click of a button, each "no words" graphic causes an event to happen. Some graphics are actions, while others lead to places that offer more choices. For example, in the kitchen, McGee can choose to use the telephone or throw the dog a biscuit; exits to the living room and great outdoors complete the options available in the kitchen frame. The *McGee* series is definitely meant for toddlers, and **Lawrence Productions, Inc.** provides excellent documentation on how preschoolers can get the most from these programs.

Mom and Dad: Hands Off!

Among its suggestions, Lawrence includes a notice to parents, asking them to allow their child to use the mouse and choose panels on his or her own, avoiding the temptation of adult interference. Lawrence also suggests that a child create stories about the panels, as well as guessing the consequences of choosing any given panel. He or she may draw maps of the places or simply describe what the characters are doing at any given time.

Lawrence is careful to point out that there are no dead ends. Success is automatically insured since all panels do something. In addition, the preschool child learns to feel comfortable with the computer, develops motor skills and increases his or her self-esteem. Furthermore, the program, played without parental aid, fosters a sense of independence. The thorough documentation includes a summary of the *McGee* series, instructions on booting, hard disk installation and instructions on exiting the program.

Sensory Input

McGee's world, as "no words" software, depends on graphics, sound and animation rather than written text to sustain a player's interest. Fortunately, all of these elements are excellent. The sound is clear, though greatly enhanced through the use of attached speakers. Speech, as well as animal and nature sounds, are distributed among the panels. For example, in *Katie's Farm*, as Katie and McGee sail a small boat across the water, one can hear the sound of the water sloshing beneath the pressure of the tiny vessel's hull. People and animals show minute changes of facial expressions, varying in different places and situations. The settings are, in general, realistically presented. The objects are things that appear in virtually every child's life. This adds a feeling of security, and allows the toddler to further identify with McGee and his adventures. McGee's home looks lived in, especially his toy-filled room. The backyard offers the basic enchantments of tire-swinging and dandelion blowing. Katie's farm is overrun with traditional farm animals who appear in conventional roles, complete with standard sounds and actions. *McGee at the Fun Fair* captures the personalities of a variety of people. They are all friendly and seem to exist for the sole purpose of entertaining the main characters and, of course, the pre-school player.

The superb graphics are equalled by their accompanying animation. Minute detail characterizes every panel. The original program, *McGee*, features a cat who will yawn, open its eyes, arch its neck and meow plaintively whenever it is awakened. When Katie and McGee jump into a haystack, the player can see the straw flying through the air. Actions do not simply happen — all of the intermediary steps are shown.

Fun at Home

McGee's world is presented through the eyes of a toddler. The original program, *McGee*, features the adventures of the early-rising McGee as he explores his home. The tousled blond boy can do anything from waking up his mother to blowing dandelion spore. The bathroom can become a miniature expedition, and scrambling under the rug provides a further use for McGee's boundless energy. The graphics, animation, sound effects and a

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

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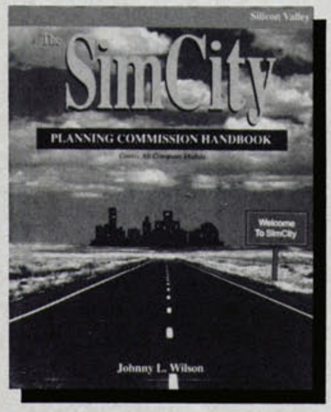
The Official Guide to Sid Meier's *Railroad Tycoon*

By Russell Sipe   Published by COMPUTE Books $12.95 U.S.A. $16.50 Canada

This is the *only* source of insider information available for *Railroad Tycoon*—direct from the designers of the game.

"As a railroad buff and a great fan of the game, Russell is the ideal person to write this book. He brings to this project a knowledge and enthusiasm of the colorful history of railroading, and adds a wealth of background information. Players who read this book will improve their play, understanding and enjoyment of Railroad Tycoon.*"*

— Sid Meier, designer of *Railroad Tycoon*



The *SimCity* PLANNING COMMISSION HANDBOOK

By Johnny Wilson   Published by Osborne-McGraw Hill $14.95

"Each time we read this book we learned something, because it explains the theory behind the game and doesn't just list one-two-three hints."

START magazine

"Reading the drafts for The *SimCity* Planning Commission Handbook *has been quite educational and entertaining for me, but also strangely familiar, as I go through the discovery process once again."*

Will Wright, designer of *SimCity*

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IN THE WORKS

THE *SimEarth* BIBLE

Johnny Wilson follows up his best-selling *SimCity* book with *The* SimEarth *Bible* from Osborne-McGraw Hill. It's packed with insightful information about our planet and Maxis' new game. Look for the book this Fall.

CHUCK YEAGER'S Air Combat Handbook

This Official Strategy guide will be the first book released in the *Computer Gaming World Presents* bookline (*CGW* and Prima Publishing). Authors: Russell Sipe and Mike Weksler. Fall release.

Sid Meier's CIVILIZATION

In Spring 1992 you will be able to buy the second book in the *CGW Presents* line. As yet untitled, it will be the definitive strategy guide to Sid Meier's *CIVILIZATION*.

touch of humor enhance all options. For example, when one chooses the toilet in the bathroom, McGee smiles enchantingly, closes the door, and leaves the viewer out in the hallway. In a few seconds, one hears the sound of a toilet flushing, and McGee emerges. A nice feature in the original *McGee*, which should be added to *Katie's Farm* and *Fun Fair*, is the ability to choose the volume level.

Adventures in Farming

The second McGee program, *Katie's Farm*, combines the intriguing qualities of the original program with the doctrines of imagination and responsibility. In this program, McGee's rambunctious cousin Katie introduces McGee to her farm. The two friends go fishing, berry-picking and haystack jumping. Katie animates a scarecrow for McGee, and their giggles resound throughout the program. Humor predominates this program. As Katie hands the berries to McGee, he eats them on the spot, oblivious to the nearby berry basket. McGee watches a cow being milked, only to get milk squirted all over his face.

However, despite all the laughter, the farm also promotes a feeling of responsibility. Katie gathers eggs, and feeds the cats and hens. This program also stresses nature. Besides the natural quality of the farm itself, one of the panels focuses entirely on a tree filled with clambering squirrels and fledgling birds.

Fair Game

The third offering in the series, *McGee at the Fun Fair*, introduces a different quality than that of its two predecessors. The basic adventure consists of McGee and his friend Tony exploring a fair. This safe, people-oriented environment presents traditional carnival fare with jugglers, hot dog stands and clowns. The novelties encountered are certainly interesting, but the boys seem much less personable than in the earlier programs. Their only reaction to caricatures, clowns, musicians and kites are a series of "Gees" and "Wows." However, the lack of speech is compensated by the fair's attractions. One three-year-old playing this program was completely enthralled by a juggler rapidly tossing red balls. She also loved the various playgrounds, watching over and over as McGee, descending the sliding pole, landed with a neat bump on his bottom.

Big Fun for Little Kids

Overall, the *McGee* series is excellent and should appeal to a preschool market. One advantage of these programs is that pressing a single panel repeatedly will engender a slightly different response each time. The three programs present a varied agenda, but they all address a preschool audience. *McGee* emphasizes daily routine and the pleasures of the home. *Katie's Farm* presents a combination of work and play, independence and security, as well as humor and imagination. *McGee at the Fun Fair* shows the thrilling novelties of an amusement park.

These "no words" programs successfully present small adventures in realistic and non-threatening environments. McGee is charming, personable and friendly, and the three programs should provide hours of fun and stimulation for preschool players. **cgw**

See the World



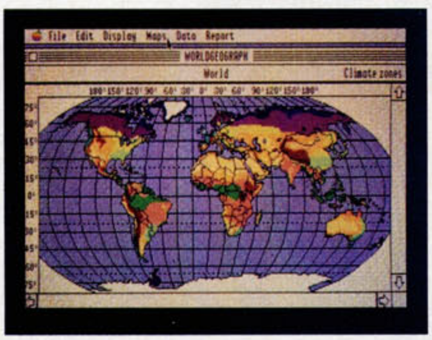
















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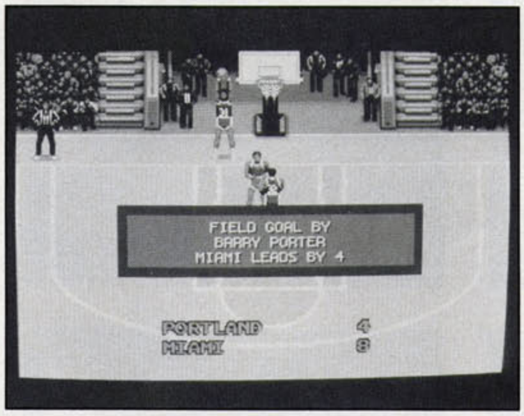
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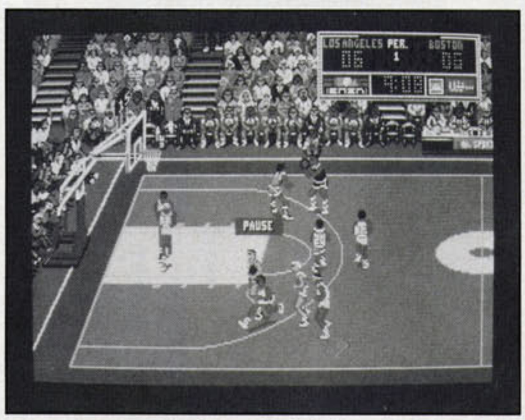
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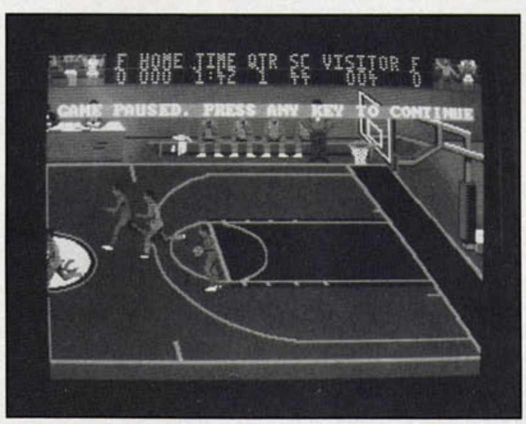
by Dan Spezzano and Wyatt Lee



TV Sports Basketball



Lakers vs. Celtics



Magic Johnson MVP Basketball

For those who can't wait until that magical time when every red-blooded college student paints his face in school colors and cheerleaders no longer have goosebumps on their shapely legs because their favorite varsity has moved indoors, there is always the chance to shoot those buckets on the computer screen.

Playing the Zones

There have been several basketball games released over the last couple of years, but only a few of them play string music when it comes to bringing the real flavor of basketball home. One such product is **Cinemaware**'s *TV Sports Basketball* (IBM & Amiga, still available through mail-order sources) which boasts the ability for four-player action (Amiga version). Players can take on the computer, challenge a friend or team up on the same side. The sparkling graphics and sound make this game very sweet and it has a fine mixture of both strategy and arcade action to challenge most basketball fans.

In *TV Sports Basketball*, one can control any player desired via the role-playing option or, alternately, control whomever has the ball (at the player's option). We suggest the role-playing option for beginners, as it is the easiest to become accustomed to. Passing is also a snap with the computer assistance available.

When passing, a circle appears around the receiving player's number. If the circle is green, it's a safe pass; a red circle means a risky pass; and a white circle means there is a good chance the ball will be turned over. For hard-core players, turn both these options off and increase the difficulty. This will give the game a "free" feeling.

TV Sports Basketball is no slouch on sound support, either; sneakers squeak, baskets whoosh and the crowd really roars. One particularly annoying thing about *TV Sports Basketball* is that the officials tend to call a lot of charging fouls, although this is a common complaint for most of the games on the market.

Laker vs Celtics from **Electronic Arts** (IBM and Sega Genesis) offers statistically modified arcade action. Human players *do* control the on-screen athletes, but no matter how perfect the timing when taking a shot, it is the real-life player's shooting percentage that will usually make the difference. The human player's action determines shot selection more than shot execution.

The splendid graphics in the VGA and Sega versions would make this game a terrific addition to any basketball fan's library (CGA owners should beware, however — this game is next to impossible to play in this graphics mode because it is so difficult to tell which players are being controlled) if it were not too easy to play. It does not offer enough of a pure action challenge for arcade-style gamers and it tends to be too high-scoring for statistics buffs. The Sega version seems to be the fastest playing of the bunch, and watching Michael Jordan doing a Tomahawk slam is almost like watching the real



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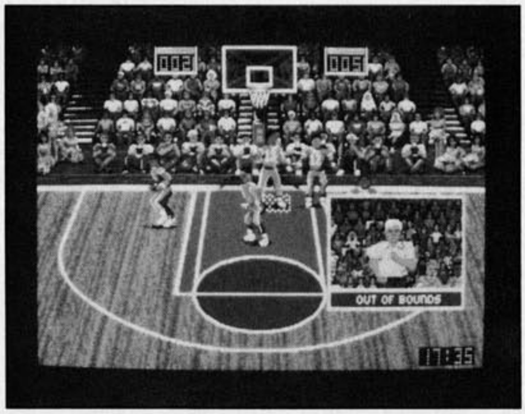
thing. Every player's patent moves are there, from Tom Chambers' "double clutch slam" to Magic's "fake dish and lay-up." Yet, some will be frustrated by the fact that teams do not change baskets at the end of each quarter (memory constraints, no doubt), defensive capabilities seem relatively limited and there is no provision for playing through one's own league (only the NBA tournament) or drafting customized teams of one's favorite players.

On the Court

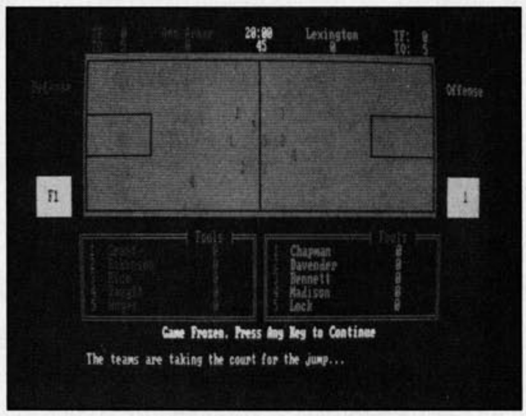
Also in the competition is **Virgin Mastertronics**' *Magic Johnson MVP Basketball*. It features reasonably large figures and is a faithful conversion of the popular coin-op game. For pure action gamers, it offers an excellent challenge and the two-on-two action allows for fast-scrolling full court action. If one is looking for a game that includes strategy or league play, one must look elsewhere. If one is looking for quick outlet passes, pick 'n rolls without the distraction of having too many players on the court and caricatured slam dunks, this may be the basketball game of choice.

Perhaps the most challenging pure action game is *The Dream Team* from **Data East**. A game inspired by both the classic *GBA Championship Basketball* game and the real-life three-on-three half-court basketball competitions performed by Dominique Wilkins, Joe Dumars and Patrick Ewing on behalf of charity, *The Dream Team* allows human players to design and call plays, maneuver the on-screen athletes and take the open shots. The shot interface is much less forgiving than it is in the other games, however. When the human player tells the on-screen athlete to shoot, a power bar which looks something like a thermometer pops up on the screen. If the human player lets go of the space bar (if using the keyboard controls) or fire button #1 (if using joystick controls) at precisely the moment the "mercury" gets to the top of the thermometer, the shot will be good. If the human player is off even a half-second, the shot will miss. It does not seem to matter how high the on-screen athlete's shooting percentage is from various ranges (e.g. Ewing would normally be deadly under the basket), it all hinges on the human player's reflexes. Add to this the fact that fouls are often called whether the offending player is even near the other players or not and one gets a sense of how frustrating this game can be.

Nevertheless, the game features large



The Dream Team



Basketball Challenge

on-screen players, digitized speech, colorful graphics, a tournament option (somewhat akin to league play) and an easy-to-use (if not easy-to-master) interface. It offers much of the action of the sport without cluttering the game with too much detail.

Chalk Talk

When it comes to strategy, none of the games mentioned comes anywhere close to meeting the need. One is more likely to find better non-graphic basketball *strategy* games (see below). *TV Sports Basketball* is fairly competitive, however. The on-screen athletes, as well as the coach, are given a ranking on a scale from one to thirteen. This determines how many "talent points" can be distributed to each of that player's six categories: shooting, passing, defense, rebounding, quickness and jumping. Fatigue plays a big role in *TV Sports Basketball* and one will have to keep a constant eye on the various players' conditions during timeouts. This is displayed visually by the player's stance. If he is standing upright, he is fine; if slouched over, he is exhausted. Aside from observing the fatigue factor, little "strategy" element is included in *TV Sports Basketball*.

Hit the Showers

There are some other, older games out there if one is intent on checking all of them. For those not concerned with graphics, there is *Lance Haffner's Courtside College Basketball* (formerly *Final Four College Basketball*) and *Basketball: The Pro Game*. Human coaches determine line-ups, substitutions and defensive sets, as well as shot selection, in this pure strategy game.

Those who have always wanted to be college coaches should definitely check out *Basketball Challenge* by **XOR Corporation**. The game features limited graphics, basically animated arabic numerals cavorting about the screen, and statistics files which enable one to coach a thinly disguised version of an actual college team. Human coaches can set line-ups, offensive and defensive sets, as well as make substitutions, call set plays from the sidelines or even order one particular player to take the "money" shot in the closing seconds of a half or game. Human coaches can basically exploit mismatches and monitor fatigue in order to gain advantage over rival coaches in this fascinating strategic challenge.

Finally, one can also still pick up a copy of **Avalon Hill**'s venerable *NBA Basketball* direct from the company (it is still in their latest catalog). Gamers who remember the *Pure Stat* line of sports programs will know how this largely menu-driven statistics-based game plays. Human coaches make their selections for line-ups, substitutions and shot selection, then watch a crude animation that displays the result of each play.

For now, however, we "hoopsters" must be content with what is available. Still, these reviewers would like to see a game in which the computer will "auto play" games for advanced league play. In addition to involving more strategy, a complete game should be able to play more than just man-to-man (a little 2-3 zone or a box and one would be nice) and a good routine for calling and handling fouls should be installed.

There are some bright spots, though, on the up-and-coming list. **APBA** has been preparing to release a basketball game based upon their popular boardgame and **Bethesda Softworks** (*Wayne Gretzky Hockey*) is working with **Mirage Graphics** (*Earl Weaver Baseball*) to create a statistics-based college basketball game. We're anxious to see both of them. **cgw**

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Explore the History of Computer Games

Early CGW back issues are the THE RESOURCE for the early history of computer games and the computer game industry. These issues are in short supply. Follow the sage old rule in regards to hard-to-find books: when you find 'em, buy 'em; chances are they won't be there later. Prices are based on availability.

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"There I Was in My P-51..."

A Campaign for Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

by Russell Sipe and Charles A. Smith

Although *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* (*YAC*) is an excellent air combat game and one that anyone interested in air combat during WWII, Korea and/or Vietnam will want to purchase, the game does have a glaring shortcoming. The campaign game leaves a lot to be desired. When one starts a YAC campaign, one works through the exact same missions played in the regular game.

Although there are *some* differences in the campaign game (e.g., one cannot use game "helps", one has to return to base, the missions are flown more or less in order), the campaign basically is simply playing through all the regular missions. When a mission is successfully completed in the campaign, that mission is check marked on the menu. That's all that happens. There is no victory screen at the end of the campaign congratulating the player for a job well done. Well, we want more and we think players do as well.

So here is the Chuck Yeager Air Combat P-51 Campaign. The original design by Charles A. Smith has been modified by Russell Sipe for the upcoming *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat Handbook*. The *Handbook* will contain campaigns for all the player-flyable aircraft in *YAC* (i.e., P-51, FW-190, F-86, MiG-15, F-4, and MiG-21).

The P-51 Campaign uses a typical role-playing structure to take a character through a 100-mission campaign. Although it attempts to give a historical feel for combat in the period in question, this is not an attempt to create a heavy-duty historical simulation of life as a P-51 pilot.

The campaign is divided into three periods. The first, "Introduction of the P-51," covers the period 4/43 to 4/44 (roughly the period from the time of the introduction of the P-51 until it became the #1 aircraft in the 8th Air Force fighter arsenal). The second period, "Dominance of the P-51" covers the period from 5/44 (when the P-51 finally surpassed the P-47 for number of operational fighters in the theater) to the end of the year. The final period covers 1945. Note that although "Ramrod" carries a 11/44 date in YAC it fits well in Tour 3 of our campaign.

To play the campaign one will need two six sided dice (2D6 in role-playing shorthand). Roll on the "Do You Make Contact Today?" chart. Roll a die and follow the instructions. Here are the rules:

1) Use no game "helps". Do not use Control-W or Control-Z.

2) Eject only when level and over 400 ft in altitude.

3) The player must land at his own base or safely eject after every mission.

4) Level-crash survival is only possible at speeds of less than 125mph.

Record missions on the charts provided. Keep a logbook of the most interesting missions. Then write them up. "There I was..."

Playing *YAC* as a campaign changes dramatically one's attitude about missions. Whereas before the tendency may have been to dive in fearlessly and foolishly, one will now be forced to use common sense. The player will chose his fights. Sometimes discretion *is* the better part of valor.

Introduction of P-51
Tour 1

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

Pilot Log

Pilot Name:

Aircraft Name:

1 Do you make contact today?	
1D6	**Result:**
1-3	No contact today (1)
4-6	Yes, create scenario (2)
Modifiers:	
+1 during Tour 1	

(1) Check off a mission box and roll again for another

(2) Go to Table A and begin series to determine mission

Dominance of P-51
Tour 2

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

The Home Stretch
Tour 3

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

Completed
Kills

Astute players will notice that the campaign gets easier as time goes along. In 1943, the Luftwaffe was powerful and deadly. As time when on, the Allied war machine pressed the Luftwaffe hard. Veteran German pilots were lost through attrition. German pilots became greener as time marched on. Part of the same dynamic was the domination of the air war by the Americans and British. However, although things got easier, they still were deadly. It will take skill, courage, intelligence and luck to survive all 100 missions. Good luck! **CGW**

P-51 Mustang Campaign

Table A Mission Type?

1D6	Result
1-2	Historical Mission
3-6	Create Mission

H1 Historical Mission

2D6	Result
Tour 1: Intro of P-51	
2-5	Abbeville Boys
6-8	Escort
9-12	Operation Argument
Tour 2: Dominance of P-51	
2-4	Ace In A Day
5-7	Ground Attack
8-9	Meat On The Table
10-12	Storm Bird
Tour 3: The Home Stretch	
2-6	Ramrod
7-8	Dawn Patrol
9-12	Rocket Fighters

H2 Difficulty Level → Begin

2D6	Result
2-4	Easy
5-8	Normal
9-10	Hard
11-12	Expert

Modifiers:
+1 during Tour 1
-1 during Tour 3

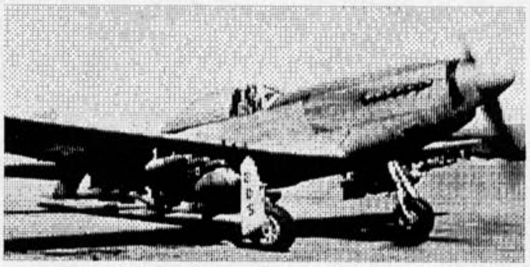
C1 Altitude

2D6	Result
2-3	2,500
4-5	5,000
6-7	10,000
8-9	20,000
10-11	30,000
12	40,000

C2 Tactical Position

1D6	Result
1-2	Jumped
3-4	Saw
5-6	Was Jumped By

Modifiers:
+1 during Tour 1



There I was in my P-51 . . .

USAF COLLECTION

Bailout Survival

1D6	Result
1-4	Survive (1)
5-6	Death/Capture

Bailout if less than 400 feet results in death

(1) Roll new mission on Table A

C3 #Opponents

2D6	Result
2-5	One
6-7	Two
8-9	Three
10-11	Four
12	Five

Modifiers:
-1 during Tour 3
-1 if opponents now =4
-3 if opponents now >5

Level Landing Crash Survival

1D6	Result
1-3	Survive (1) (2)
4-6	Death

Modifier:
+1 if landing gear up

(1) Must be level and less than 125 mph
(2) Roll new mission on Table A

C4 Aircraft

2D6	Result
2-5	FW-190
6-7	Me-109
8-9	Me-110
10	Me-163
11-12	Me-262

Modifiers:
+1 during Tour 2
+2 during Tour 3

C5 Continue

1D6	Result
1-2	"and" (go to C5)
3-6	"." (go to C6)

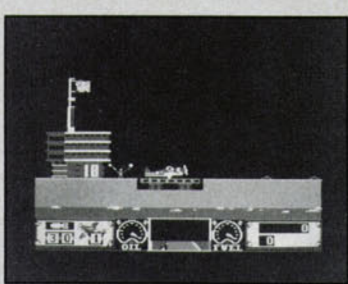
Modifier:
+1 if this is second "and"

C6 Opponent Skill → Begin

2D6	Result
2-4	Amateur
5-8	Mediocre
9-10	Good
11-12	Excellent

Modifiers:
+2 during Tour 1
+1 during Tour 2

Another Look
Wings of Fury



8.38 R.I.D. Rating

Back in 1987, a computer game meant an Apple computer game. One of the most diverting games of its day was *Wings of Fury* from **Broderbund**. An arcade wargame, *Wings of Fury* put the player at the controls of a U.S. Navy WWII F6F Hellcat fighter-bomber. Although offering no first-person perspective (i.e., "cockpit view" of the action), the game is a delight to play simply by watching the action scroll straight left and right.

Beginning each mission means arming with the right types of ammunition. While always having effective machine guns (with unlimited ammunition), other ordnance is a choice between a large supply of bombs, a few rockets or a single torpedo. Depending on the mission (island bombardment, air-to-sea attack or combat air patrol), choosing the right weapons makes all the difference.

Dogfighting is a simple "dance of death" by circling around with enemy fighters in an attempt to maneuver onto their tails so that machine guns have an opportunity to smoke Zeroes. Still, the most fun is dropping bombs on enemy buildings, bunkers and machine gun nests. After a building is destroyed, survivors run to destroyed AAA batteries and begin to reoperate them. Thus, each enemy "guy" had to be carefully gunned down individually (since the scenario isn't over until the last guy buys it).

Computer Gaming World Index: *Wings of Fury* was featured in issue 51 and was peeked in issue 42. **cgw**

Post-CES Surprise

(Continued from page 37)

venture/role-playing wrap. Entitled *Codename: White Shadow*, the game puts the player in the command of an air squadron in a war against the druglords. The topical nature of the subject matter may make this a controversial game, but the concept of combining strategic decision-making with the action required in a flight simulation will certainly garner its own supporters.

Many of the other flight simulations that were being demonstrated at Summer CES were products that were closer to production versions than they were when last seen, but revealed no *new* features. Due out *real soon now* are: **Lucasfilm**'s *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe* (the latest version of their action/simulations, complete with the mission planner which adds strategic factors that were missing from the earlier games), **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Falcon 3.0* (with plenty of chrome and one of the sweetest flight models we've seen when used with a math co-processor) and **Three-Sixty**'s *MegaFortress* (the first flight simulation that really puts together the crew elements along with the pilot elements of a simulation).

One of the big announcements at Summer CES was by **Origin**. Chris Roberts, designer of the phenomenally successful *Wing Commander*, unveiled his *Strike Commander*, a post-disaster air combat game using a simplified F-16 flight model. Roberts has taken his graphics techniques of texture mapping, shading and use of disguised polygons and created a near-future environment of fighter/bomber combat. The technological requirements are steep (one really needs 2 MB of RAM and a fast 386 to get the most out of the game) and expanded memory is required. Bureaucratic bad guys (remnants of the I.R.S.) and anarchistic foes threaten the peaceful existence of the protagonist and the game's story has a feel like the *Wingman* series of "men's action" novels.

Data East is also releasing a near-future "simulation" of existing military hardware. The cockpits of actual tanks (M-1, Bradley and T-80) are faithfully



Strike Commander

rendered with *active* controls (mouse-driven). Air support is a vital factor in the game and can be used to illuminate the tanker's targets. It is not a polygon-filled simulation, but when several computer gamers are hooked together over a local area network (Novell) and fighting a battle against the computer, it should have an interesting feel similar to the U.S. Army's *SimNet*.

Time of Decision (Strategy Games)

Strategy games are always a staple for the computer gamer and there are plenty of different styles to choose from. **Maxis**, originators of the "software toy" concept, have created a more game-like concept in their *SimAnt* product. Will Wright has done his usual thorough job in presenting background on the subject matter and simulating realistic aspects of living creatures. Matters like caste control (allowing players to control workers, males, soldiers, repletes and queen ants) and war between colonies are simulated. Players can even take an opposite point of view by becoming spiders and eating the ants.

The company is also talking about *SimCity 2*. Players/city managers



Falcon 3.0



UltraBots

should be able to terrace their cities, using various levels for parking, traffic control and housing; place buildings on 3-D hillsides; handle realistic issues like waste management and more. It looks like it is going to be much more involved and realistic than the original product.

Sid Meier has taken a different approach in *Civilization*. It is a competitive multi-player strategy game with definite victory conditions and a great deal of replayability. Players find cities, explore continents and, eventually, the world in an *Empire*-style manner. They must make economic decisions and can advance their civilization by prioritizing technological choices which, in turn, are all interrelated with where the civilization can move next. The goal of the game is to capture something of the flow of civilization. It has, pretty much, a bent toward the discoveries and advancement of western civilization, but eastern civilization is not ignored. It also does not attempt to recreate actual history in our world (unless, of course, one plays the specific scenario designed to replay this specific history).

Spectrum HoloByte is experimenting with a geopolitical game that will probably require CD-ROM to fully implement. In the meantime, their *Crisis in the Kremlin* features an unbiased perspective in which the player can become a Soviet politician. One can allocate resources, make political decisions and enjoy the dry social humor of the Soviet member of the U.S./U.S.S.R. design team.

Continuing to use their Soviet resources, the company unveiled *Wordtris*. Think of the game as *Tetris* with letters and a requirement that players spell out words. It allows for solo, competitive and cooperative play. It looks like a fascinating word game *if* they manage to expand the dictionary beyond the demonstration version. It certainly looks the most interesting of the series since the original.

Data East's *UltraBots: Sanction Earth*, described in the last CES Report has some exciting strategic aspects to it. The multi-player (Novell compatible) game features potential cooperative play and allows players to build supply lines, use combined arms tactics and control the flow of the game from inside a "situation" room.



Civilization

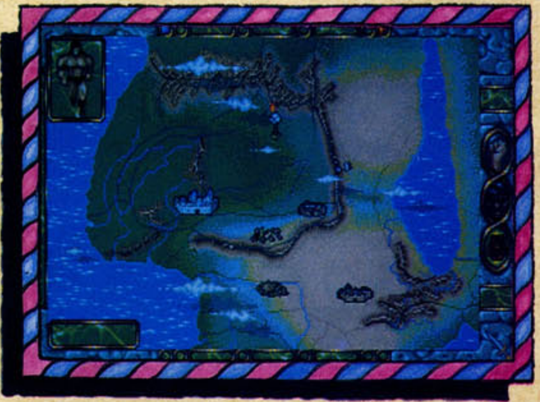
Getting in Line (Conclusion)

Although some products have been delayed until the fall, the entertainment software industry really seems to be reaching a coming of age. Products have reached a point where there seem to be almost universally high production values and most production teams have a good rationale for when they are taking technological risks (not just performing "stupid computer tricks"). Indeed, to paraphrase the song, "the graphics are so bright, we have to wear shades!" **cgw**

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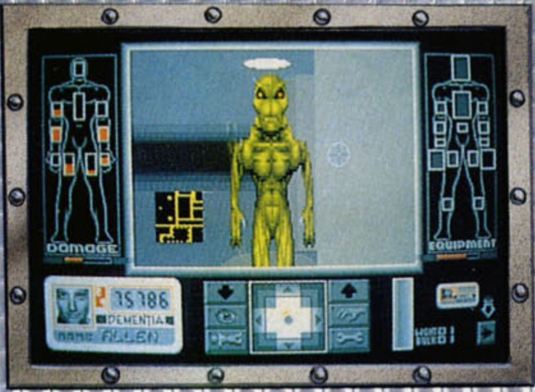
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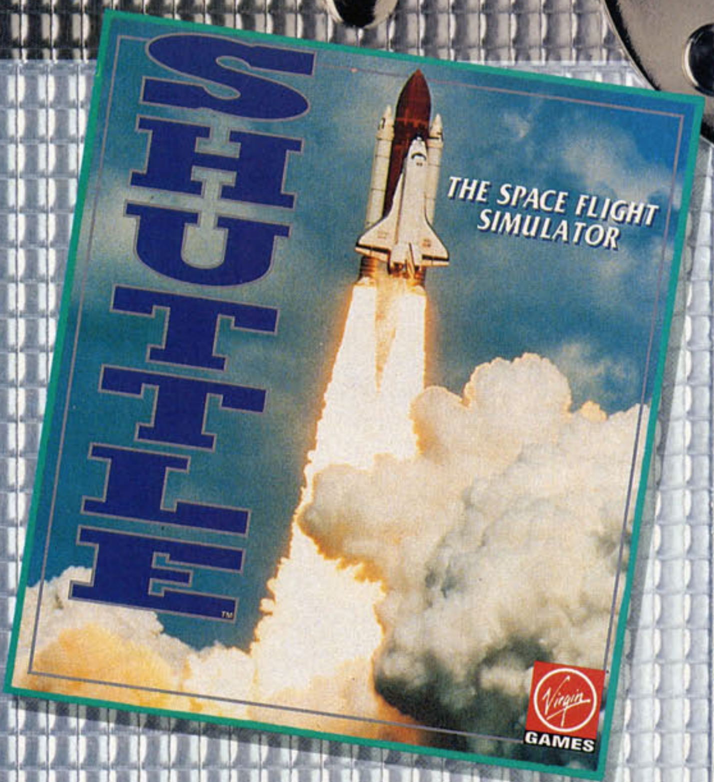
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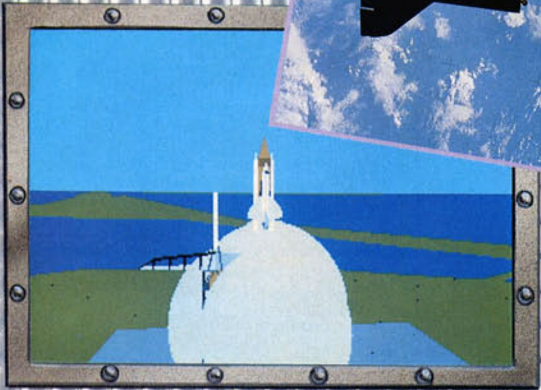
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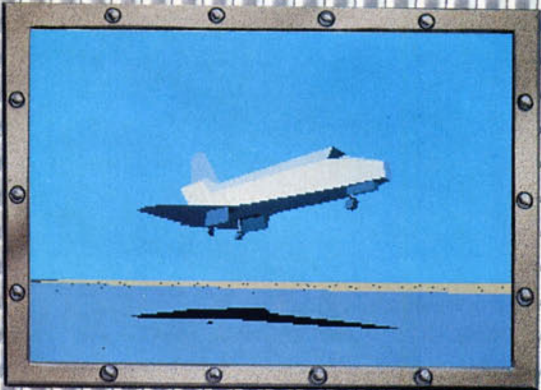
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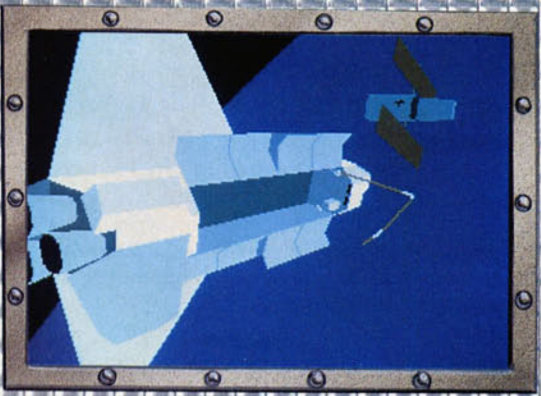
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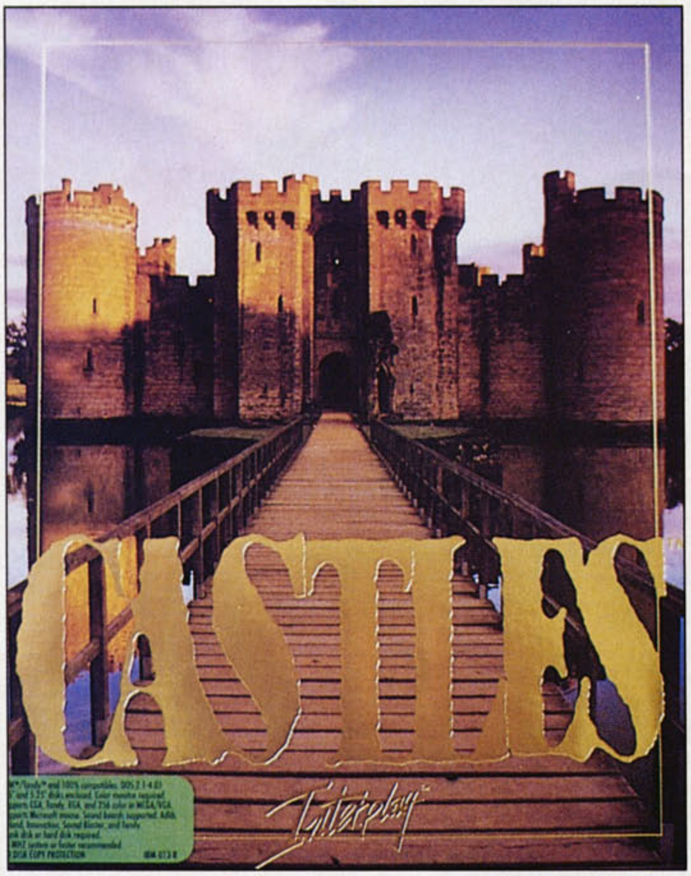
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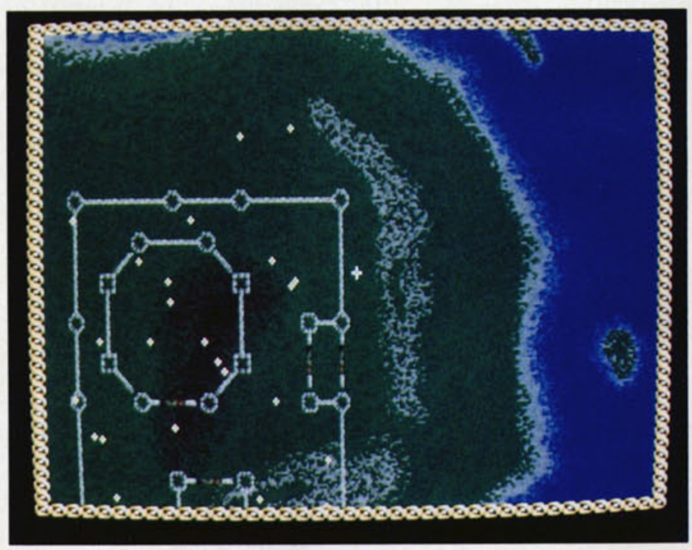
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Stick With Stones

By Peter Olafson



TITLE:	Castles
SYSTEM:	IBM (Amiga and Mac versions planned)
PRICE:	$59.95
COPY PROTECT:	One-time look-up
DESIGNER:	Scott Bennie
PUBLISHER:	Interplay Productions Santa Ana, CA



The ant farm is making a comeback via the personal computer. How else to explain the wealth of tiny animated folk running around in software worlds: the little soldiers of *PowerMonger*, the little evangelicals of *Populous* or the little road hogs of *SimCity*? It's like watching insects... with a zoning board.

And so it is with **Interplay**'s recent *Castles* — a delightful game of medieval fortress-building, economics, government and warfare in which the little guys are waving hammers and saws more often than long swords.

Look here: There's a little bloke without his shirt up on the scaffold hammering at an unfinished segment of the outer wall. Another is down below sending stones up the scaffold in a bucket. Here's a carpenter working on a sawhorse, a fellow carting stones in a wheelbarrow and one up on a horse who doesn't seem to be doing anything much. (Hmmm. Must be the boss.)

No, no, this reviewer forgets. The *player* is the boss. Based on the castle-building campaigns in Wales under Edward I in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, *Castles* gives one the power to design the castle of his dreams, hire and fire seven types of workers and two of soldiers, set their wages, assign them work areas, adjust taxes to pay for all this, deal with messengers and defend against Celts (in a real-world game) and ogres and the like (in the fantasy-world game).

That's a most delicate balance, and the challenge of *Castles* is to keep the royal fingers on many pulses at once — for no fewer than eight castles in the full-fledged campaign scenario.

(Continued on page 127)

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The Rumor Bag

by Denny Ray Culpepper



Last issue, the long-suffering Rumor Bag Guy was humiliated in a Fort Worth, Texas hamburger joint by a tall, menacing Texan who poured a long-necked bottle of beer over his head and told him he'd better have more substantial rumors the next time they met. This installment finds our irrepressible gossip inside a classic mansion in downtown Fort Worth.

I sat in the relative cool of the service porch at Thistle Hill, remembering ice men making their deliveries to this point in the days before air conditioning and refrigeration. The old mansion had something of the Georgian character associated with the era of the great cattle barons. Indeed, this manse had been built for a young bride, one Mrs. Electra Waggoner Wharton. Now, after a long tenure of service as private dwelling and a home for young women, it stood as a historical landmark.

I awaited the entrance of my source and wondered whether he would have some new humiliation for this humble press thug. I thought about the past glories of the domicile in which I was waiting and realized that many people prefer the simple past of that particular old house to the future. Even some computer gamers were liable to have some misgivings about **Kesmai**'s new multi-player *MechWarrior* on the **GEnie** network and whether it would be as good as the boxed game. Now that I had seen it, however, and discovered that it would encompass some of the politics between the houses and would allow prospective players to join units of other players to accomplish missions as a group or simply start dueling other players on Solaris, I knew it was going to work. They're even trying to get a way to have Solaris battles broadcast over the newsgrid, complete with odds so that 'mech pilots can place side bets on the outcome of their fellow players' battles (only in BattleTech C-Notes, of course!).

In fact, I had heard that the very first multi-player battle tested on the Kesmai VAX featured three of Kesmai's finest outfitted in BattleMasters against the VAX's lone Locust. While Kelton and John were getting used to moving around, their assistant blasted both legs out from under the Locust and there was nothing left for the "big guys" at Kesmai to shoot at. They allegedly turned on their assistant and scorched his 'mech until he had to eject. That'll teach him not to let the boss win!

My client exited the shadows looming from the old carriage house and caused me to jump slightly as he cleared his throat. He motioned for me to follow him through the kitchen and around, through a sitting room from the last century. As the flames in the fireplace manipulated shadows across the room like a master programmer shuffles pixels on a monitor screen, I mentioned that the shadows made me feel like I was in the middle of a Gothic novel. "Wahl," he said, "ah wuz tryin' to give ya' the raht feel fer the rumor. Ah wanted ta tell ya' that **Data East** is producin' a *Shadowrun* computer game." Frankly, I was surprised. I hadn't realized that **Data East** had licensed the fictional **FASA** universe where cyberpunk activity and strange magical properties have gone awry.

In return, I told him that **Dynamix** was pleased enough about the success of their dark futuristic game, *Rise of the Dragon*, that they were not only porting it to the Macintosh and the Amiga, but they were also getting ready to announce a *Rise of the Dragon 2*. I was relieved when he leaned against the beautifully varnished banister and smiled. "Now," he asked, "tell me somethin' about a company whut isn't one of the big publishers."

I asked him if he remembered the old **SPI** boardgame *Empires of the Middle Ages* and he reluctantly admitted that he did, complaining bitterly that it took too long to play. "Ah," I replied, "but what if your computer did all the bookkeeping and you could play a full game during one relatively short session?" As his face showed unmistakable signs of concern, I knew I had him. "It's called *Rise of the West*, but it isn't for sale. Well, not unless **TSR** decides to let someone publish it. The guy just wrote it for the Amiga because his friends have one and he hasn't even tried to sell it. I'm hoping one of the computer wargame publishers buys it."

I could tell from his expression that wargames were his forté, so I told him about **Changeling Software**'s *Pax Imperium* and **SSG**'s new MS-DOS *Carriers At War*. "The first one is a space conquest game in search of a publisher. It's like *Reach for the Stars*, except the planets in each star system have realistic rotation and rival players can be networked together. The second is a *very* fancy version of a classic wargame. It features hot VGA graphics of ship silhouettes (*including* a sophisticated version of **SSG**'s 'Warpaint' feature, allowing the user to create the detailed graphics and animated explosions) and fascinating pictorial representations of airfields and aircraft carrier decks. It even illustrates events that were in the original Apple II code, but couldn't be displayed because of memory constraints on the older machine."

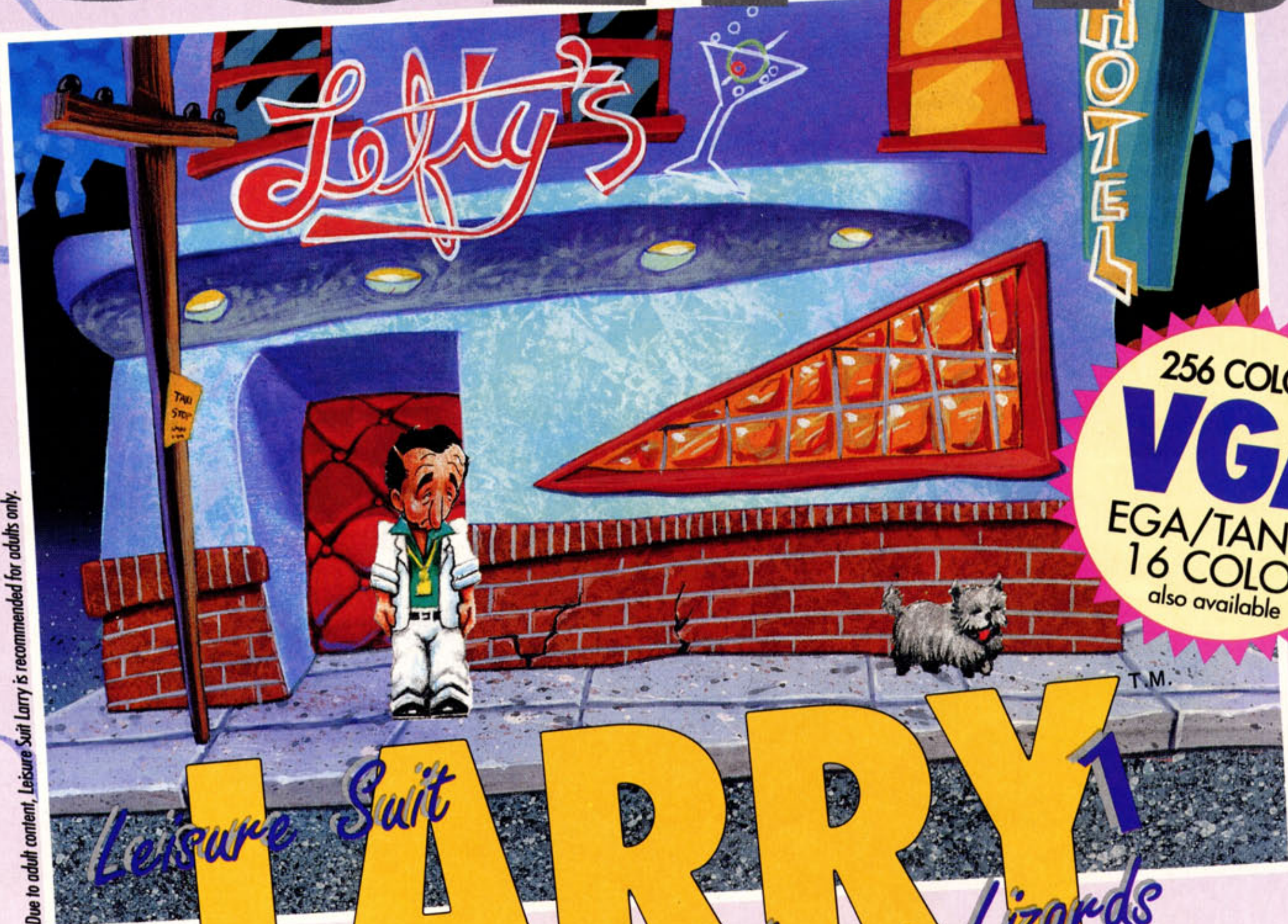
He hitched his pants like you would expect John Wayne to do prior to a gunfight and, fearing a repeat of the fermented shower trick, I quickly told him that there was going to be a multi-player *Harpoon* on **GEnie**. I shared that even Don Gilman (who is responsible for ongoing work on the computer version of *Harpoon* and its attendant products) was impressed.

My contact was impressed, too. He reached into the pocket of his jacket and retrieved a long-necked bottle of beer, setting it gently on the bottom step. "Wahl," he laughed, grinning like a used car salesman circling for the kill, "ya' surprised me." (Whew, no hops shower after all!) "Guess ya'all know whut yore doin' after all. Ya' shore wouldn't know it from reading thet column of yore's."

I surreptitiously unscrewed the cap of his intended weapon and silently prayed that I could accomplish two things: 1) avoid spilling any of the suds I was about to pour down his back on the floor of the grand Texas landmark and 2) get away before he could tie me up like a wrangled calf in a rodeo competition and leave me for the good folks at Texas Heritage to find. Fortunately, I slipped away as neatly as a rodeo clown avoids a brahma bull. As neatly, you might say, as a rumor monger collects rumors. **CGW**

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Circle Reader Service #64

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Over There

For My Next Impression...

by Paul Rigby
CGW Overseas Correspondent



Merchant Colony



Mad TV

The UK software house **Impressions** has been extremely active recently. In fact, this month they have two games on offer. The first is *Merchant Colony*, a strategy game that involves the quest to establish and develop colonies in South America and Africa during the age of expansion. The player's manifest destiny is to take the role of one of the marauding countries involved. Ships can be hired and filled with explorers or colonists. The latter fall into a number of categories. Agricultural colonists settle and dig in to grow crops, while explorers search for precious minerals. Teachers, storemen and workers all have their own roles in life and, of course, soldiers are also present to protect the colony from the natives and other expansionist powers who tend not to pick and choose whose territory they actually expand into! *Merchant Colony*, available now, includes trade, multiple ship types, an iconic interface and presentable graphics. Priced £29.99 for the Amiga and ST.

The second **Impressions** game is *Cohort*, subtitled "Fighting for Rome," a computer game that emulates the miniature/board game format that Impressions' own *Rourke's Drift* utilized. This game of tactical combat covers twenty battle variations over four centuries. Multiple terrain is used (cliffs, hills, bridges) but not fortified constructions. Troop types cover the usual three infantry and cavalry types plus archers, with each figure representing 50 cavalry or 100 infantry. Troop icons (a maximum of 96 units can be deployed), which are rated for morale, attack strength and so on, can be grouped to enable tactical maneuvers. With eight directional troop movements and three speed levels, *Cohort* retails at £29.99 and is available now for the Amiga and ST.

"As the security droids ushered you toward the termination cube, your head buzzed with a million thoughts — every one linked to the fact that you are, surprisingly enough, innocent. The urge was to run. However, heavily armed droids and angry looking lasers quickly dispelled that idea. However, escape was a priority. You had to find those responsible for your present predicament, to clear your name and present the guilty to justice."

This ST text/graphic adventure, created using the *STAC* adventure system designed by Acesoft for **Zenobi Software**, accepts the usual commands with RAMSAVE/LOAD and the option to alter the size of the current font. Available now for £4.99 from Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL12 7NX.

Logical, from **Rainbow Arts**, is based on a very simple idea: colored marbles fall into rotatable four-hole receptacles. The player's job is to try and collect four of one color in each receptacle. It is very much like *Connect Four*, the classic family game, in fact. These receptacles are connected by channels all over the screen. The player must rotate the receptacles in 90-degree angles and collect the matching marbles that fall into the playing area with increasing speed. *Logical* is a 100-level game with four different backgrounds. A construction set for creating one's own custom levels completes this mind-teasing program. Available on PC, Amiga and ST for £19.99 and C64 for £14.99 [disk], £9.99 [tape].

Rainbow Arts is also releasing *Mad TV*, a business simulation for PC, Amiga and ST. Archie has fallen in love with Betty Botterblom, the unattractive television announcer. While he walks about the Mad TV station looking for Betty, he is mistaken for Manfred L. Fenbein, the new program director. This mix-up suits our Archie as he can now see Betty all day. However, to maintain this platonic relationship, the player will have to insure success at the job lest another take the place of the player (and Archie!). So, one must transform the normal, serious TV station with horrible ratings into a wild and crazy station with colorful programming. Players search for the hottest news, finalize contracts for TV spots, produce programs and series, rent studios, sabotage their rivals and (as the saying goes) much, much more! *Mad TV* retails for £24.99, the PC version supports AdLib.

Upcoming from **Virgin Mastertronic** is *Realms*, an epic wargame set in a feudal world which is split into feuding factions and populated by a mix of exotic peoples (orcs, elves and dwarves). You must raise money, via taxation, to embark upon wars against your neighbours that include pitched battles between armies and sieges upon cities. Written by UK software developer **Graftgold**, the *Realms* play area uses a battleground that looks similar to the *Populous/Powermonger* play area. Armies are made up of eight units containing, in turn, eight troops. *Realms* is due for a September release on PC, Amiga and ST.

Strategy fans looking for something different may be interested in the latest release from **Krisalis**. *Hill Street Blues*, taken from the popular TV show, puts the player in the seat of Captain Frank Furillo. As the Captain, the player must keep his popularity up while pushing the crime rate down by supervising his team of professionals and thus protecting the city from pick-pockets, drug dealers, armed robbers, muggers and so on. Arresting them isn't good enough, though; convictions are required. One can send officers to a scene of a crime via car or on foot; take manual control of a police officer; use the police radio frequencies; examine police records; set roadblocks; arrest suspects and, occasionally, shoot suspects. Players are provided with a map of the precinct in order to plan strategy. With day and night cycles, court evidence, an icon-driven interface, digitized pictures and novel sound effects, *Hill Street Blues* is a potentially exciting product for action/strategy gamers with the PC, Amiga or ST (£24.99).

Note: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

Computer Adventure World, 318 Kensington, Liverpool, England, L7 0EY. Telephone: 01144-51-263-6306

Miles Better Software, 219/221 Cannock Road, Chadsmoor, Cannock, Staffordshire, England, WS11 2DD Telephone: 01144-543-466-577/8/80 Fax: 01144-543-466-579

Premier Mail Order, Trybridge Ltd., 8 Buckwins Square, Burnt Mills, Basildon, Essex, England, SS13 1BJ. Telephone: 01144-268-590-766 Fax: 01144-268-590-076

All of the above telephone numbers assume you can dial direct. If you have any trouble, contact the international operator. **CGW**

Taking a Peek

(Continued from page 8)

terestingly, the player need not stay in the role of one hero throughout the game, but can carry on as one of the other heroes at any point during the game. Written by comic book writer Alan Grant, his alternating gothic imagination and whimsical humor show throughout this plot of gigantic proportions. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

PC Globe, Inc.
Tempe, AZ

BUSHBUCK CHARMS, VIKING SHIPS & DODO EGGS: This delightful bit of "edutainment" has players off on a global scavenger hunt for some very odd items, indeed. Still, each is of cultural significance and players will not only learn the geography of the world in which we live, but discover fascinating bits about its diverse cultures as well. There are villains in search of these artifacts, so players must be fast and efficient in their searches. To make things even more interesting, random events and clues occur to keep the game moving along briskly. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

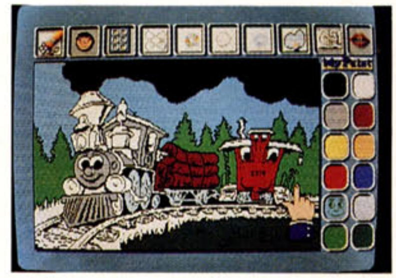
GEO JIGSAW: Sometimes, all of the pieces fall into place, but this time it is the player who must make them do so. This package breaks down into a dozen different thematic puzzles about the earth (in anywhere from six to 294 pieces, depending on the difficulty level desired). Thus, anyone from a child to a master puzzle assembler can be kept challenged. It is particularly cute to see the moving animations from the pictures continue their assignments, even after the puzzle is cut into pieces! IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

GEO PUZZLE USA: No U.S. social studies teacher should be without this! With three levels of difficulty for each of its different "games," *Geo Puzzle USA* uses the states as puzzle pieces, features quizzes on map facts, has a state trivia quiz and allows players to solve other pleasant puzzles. Typical of PC Globe, Inc., the game features lots of atlas-quality information about the states, their populations, income, etc. We especially liked being quizzed about state nicknames! Apple IIGS ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

GEO QUIZ: Something akin to *Trivial Pursuit* meets an atlas, *Geo Quiz* will challenge and teach the non-geographically inclined among us. Players will be given ten countries and (by their pre-game selection) select either their names



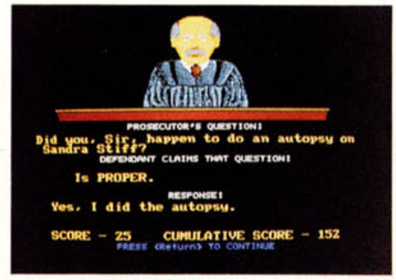
Geo Quiz



My Paint



Conflict: Middle East



Objection!

or capital's names. These selections can be either multiple choice or "fill in the blank" (as we teachers say). Time limits and a limited number of hints are available to keep the game challenging. Point scores are also kept. In addition, basic atlas information on each country is available as a type of "zoom in" feature. Apple IIGS ($49.95). Circle Service #15.

Saddleback Graphics
Santa Ana, CA

MY PAINT: A paint program *just for kids*. Well, that's not entirely true. This thirty-something-year-old reviewer couldn't stop playing with it either and his five-year old son, James, is constantly hogging daddy's computer to use *My Paint*. With 28 pictures, a dozen colors and four paintbrush variations, this package is definitely designed with little kids in mind. Since this package got home, my son insists, "I know how to use the computer." "I guess so," says daddy with a grin. IBM, Amiga, CDTV. Circle Reader Service #16.

Strategic Simulation, Inc. (SSI)
Sunnyvale, CA

CONFLICT: MIDDLE EAST: A wargame in the classic sense, this computerized conflict simulator borrows heavily from its cardboard cousins. A 1973 and a hypothetical "1990s" scenario (presupposing a hostile Egypt) are included and either one or two players (at the same computer) may command either the Arab or Israeli forces respectively. Similar in scale to *Red Lightning*, *Conflict: Middle East* features a nice keyboard/mouse interface and quick play turnaround (thanks to the fairly low unit density). Airpower is handled well (albeit abstractly) and each turn represents 12 hours of real time. Politics have been removed from this pure military simulation. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

TransMedia, Inc.
27404 Drake Road #200
Farmington Hills, MI 48331
(313) 553-9100

OBJECTION!: It's hard to imagine lawyers going for something which rewards arcade-fast reflexes, but then *Objection!* is a different kind of software package. While not a game per se, *Objection!* puts the player in the role of defense attorney. As witnesses are called to the stand, the player must quickly decide if a question asked is proper or object (by hitting the correct key) as fast as possible and on the proper grounds. Following this, the player is quizzed on the testimony given. After all, comprehension is the hallmark of a gifted lawyer as well as having a quick analytical mind. This EGA barrister training tool is highly thought-provoking and has left us at *CGW* quite intrigued. A consumer version with more sound support and featuring simpler difficulty levels will be available soon. The price given is for the professional version, complete with two criminal cases and a quality notebook full of valuable documentation. IBM ($89.00 + $5.00 for shipping). Circle Reader Service #18. **CGW**

Stick With Stones

(Continued from page 120)



Much of the actual construction is carried out to a wonderfully clockwork-like tune from the now-popular bank-camera view — save the overhead screen on which you create your castle blueprint from walls, gates and two types of towers.

Complicated as the balancing act may be, the game mechanics are easy to handle with a mouse, joystick or keyboard. One can get a status report on a castle segment simply by clicking on it, and then adding features, modifying the height and thickness or changing the assigned workforce. (Often one will want to know why no one's working on it; scaffolding is limited and construction must obey rules of sound architectural design.)

If a player can't see it to click on it — as will often happen when raising walls of the inner keep — the castle view can be flipped 180 degrees, and one can always bounce back into the overhead design mode to assign workers if that won't work.

How does it look? Quite honestly, it looks like a castle's going up inside your computer. One can see scaffolds being erected, little buckets going up the scaffolds, piles of raw stone rising and diminishing beside them, dust clouds rising when one of the walls comes tumbling down and, occasionally, cattle wandering beneath them. (What's next? *Skyscraper*? Hope so!) The surrounding countryside is lush as only England can be in the fall, and the weather-beaten grey walls have just a suggestion of... ah... offal having been tossed from the tower arrow slits.

Now, building the castle is great fun, but this module, by itself, would grow repetitive without some further distraction or challenge. Wisely, designer Scott Bennie has added two others.

One is the use of messengers. That's optional, but this reviewer suggests players give it a try, for while it takes the action away from the construction site, it adds a decided atmosphere to the game. These scenes take place on static screens with the same on-fire lushness that graced *The Lord of the Rings*; one will find the king receiving allies, chess-playing churchmen, conniving members of the court, angry Celts — all of whom he greets with the same look of kingly anticipation and to whom he must respond with one of three options.

The idea here (and elsewhere) is to keep happy each wing of society — nobles, church and people. This sounds simple, and perhaps too simple. It is not. This is not some disassociated subgame; the king's actions have a direct effect on forces at hand, castle finances and the way the world sees him, and sometimes that means he can't afford to do the right thing, or that the right thing is not the judicious, "politically correct" thing.

There's a charming variety to these encounters, and few of them are one-shot deals, meaning that decisions have consequences that rarely just vanish and so effectively become sub-plots within the game. One will find himself hungrily awaiting the next month's messenger to see just how well last month's strategy has worked.

The other sub-game is combat; after all, what is a castle for if not to hold a hostile outside world at arm's length? These days the Celts are in Boston and it's usually the Lakers' duty to take them on. Back then, the Celts were reluctant neighbors of a castle-building king. They don't want anyone here. They want to fill in your moat — do have your soldiers dig one in a spare moment, as it'll buy time — undermine your castle walls and towers and send the player galloping back to wherever he came from (*SimExile*?). Sometimes they'll come for a little chat, but more often they'll come on a maturing rage, and one will have to fight.

Regrettably, combat is rather a weak point in *Castles*. There's little more to do than set up the troops in the appropriate section of the castle, wait for the enemy to come into view and then let the two sides have at it. (There's no way to hold troops in abeyance.) If the size of one's forces — just archers and infantry — has kept pace with your castle building team, there should be little trouble.

If there is trouble, well, one *does* have the ability to direct the objectives of individual units — a function typically used to direct archers to pick off enemy troops who've made it past the buffer of the infantry.

However, the options are pretty cut and dried. It might have been nice to allow a choice of armor or weapons or plans of attack and defense in the fashion of, say, *Centurion*.

Speed may also prove a problem for people with slower systems. A system speed of 10 MHz or faster is recommended for *Castles*, but at 12 MHz (with VGA) this reviewer found the program a little slow to respond and the scrolling a bit bumpy. (It won't scroll over certain sections of the map at all.) It's entirely playable, but rather awkward scrolling back to the castle from the battlefield (which is usually somewhat removed) to resume construction. Note that entering "design" mode may help a bit, as it always exits to the castle proper, regardless of the point at which the mode was entered.

The manual is the usual excellent work — covering all the big points in the main sections and many of the smaller, buried ones in a tutorial (written in a lively period style as a roundtable discussion). It's also nice that one can select a female character. (The Queen's a dead ringer for the King, however — right down to the beard — evidently the result of memory constraints.) The copy protection is almost transparent, tossing up one question when the "set-up" menu is run to choose graphics mode and sound card, then leaving the player alone until the setup is run again.

The best thing this reviewer can say about *Castles* is that he was genuinely sorry when the last stone was lifted into place and the game ended. I wanted it to go on — to see the castle created in action, with a drawbridge and portcullis going up and down, courtiers and tradesmen walking in and out, plain people settling down outside the walls. (Sigh.)

Castles fairly begs for a sequel. **cgw**

Reopening the Hall of Fame

State of the Magazine: In any art form, a critic has several tasks to accomplish: to offer historical perspective; to lend, if possible, some meaningful application to real life; to broaden the perspective of his/her audience and the boundaries of the art form itself; to note similarities in style and meaning in other art forms and to assist individual members of the audience in determining whether the individual work of art (or even the genre itself) will meet that person's needs or desires.

At *CGW*, we have recently introduced some new features that should assist in some of these tasks. Astute readers may have already noticed the small columns entitled "Another Look" in the last couple of issues. These columns are intended either to refresh our readers' memories or to introduce them to some quality games from the past which may be either hard to find or largely ignored as later programs with "sexier" graphics or fuller sound support have been released.

Alert readers may also have noticed more coverage of educational games. Our demographics, gleaned from both reader response cards and inquiries made to the **Computer Learning Foundation**, pointed out what we should have realized all along. Since our readers are largely young adult professionals, they are also, often, parents who want to introduce their children to the wonderful world of both educational and entertainment products on the computer. So, features on children's games and educational products will appear more frequently.

Perceptive readers will also have noticed, once again, some features on cartridge games. Those who are *very* perceptive will realize that there are advertisements for cartridge games in this issue and those who are *very, very* perceptive will note that this issue is tied for the largest number of pages in *CGW* history. This means, for those who are *not* that perceptive, that the new features are *in addition* to the quality computer game coverage our readers have come to expect.

Finally, we will be introducing several deserving titles into the Hall of Fame over the next few months. Games qualify for admission to the Hall of Fame when: 1) the readers have rated the game highly over a long and sustained period of time; 2) the editorial staff believes that the product contributed something worthy to the art form and 3) the editors deem the game to still be worth playing, in spite of graphic advances and technological leaps since it was published.

Bard's Tale I introduced encounter windows with three-point animation. *Chessmaster* (both 2000 and 2100) consistently won in head-to-head competitions against its earlier rivals. *Dungeon Master* pioneered first-person perspective role-playing with extremely high-resolution graphics. *Earl Weaver Baseball* combined physical laws, statistics and action in a breakthrough sports simulation. *Empire* proved that a wargame could have simple rules and an elegant interface and *still* keep wargamers coming back for more.

F-19 Stealth Fighter showed that a simulation could have enough depth to satisfy the demands of strategy gamers without sacrificing fast-moving graphics and heart-pounding combat action. *Gettysburg* introduced an entire series of historical replays of American Civil War battles and showed how computer programs could enhance the feeling of command perspective. *Gunship* proved that one could fly a realistic flight model of a combat helicopter and still enjoy it. It is amazing that this original C-64 program still stands at the top of its class in playability and authenticity.

Kampfgruppe was the wargame aficionado's dream come true, almost. It was the computer gamer's equivalent to the boardgame classic *Panzer Blitz* and was one of the most popular computer wargames ever, but it allowed some horrendous anomalies with regard to stacking. *Mech Brigade* was a modern armor equivalent of *Kampfgruppe* and, as such, was recognized as an outstanding wargame achievement because it fixed many of the anomalies that existed in *Kampfgruppe*, though it was never the commercial success its ancestor was.

Might & Magic preceded *Dungeon Master* and offered a first-person view, as well. With a less powerful machine to work with, *M&M* broke new ground in dungeoneering with its first-person 3-D perspective and was arguably the biggest fantasy role-playing game ever to that point. *M.U.L.E.* proved it was possible to have a lively multi-player game in front of a computer console. *Pirates* showed how history and computer gaming can blend to make legends as role-playing and action combined in this classic design. *Starflight* was one of the first computer role-playing games to combine ethical decision-making and distinctive alien personality-types into a scientific role-playing game.

Ultima III concluded the first of Lord British's now-famous trilogies and showed the potential of the *Ultima* series with improved graphics, more realistic characters and a more fleshed-out story line. *Ultima IV* moved beyond this promise with its emphasis on ethics and characterization.

War in Russia was the first "monster" wargame on the computer. Large-scale wargames were commonplace in the boardgame hobby, but this classic game proved it was possible on the computer, as well. Finally, *Wizardry* was the genre-making role-playing game that showed what kind of dungeoneering was possible on the computer. The name *Wizardry* is synonymous with computer role-playing.

This issue, *Their Finest Hour* joins the roll call of great computer games. With aerial combat action in detailed bit-mapped graphics of a simulation and playback controls that offer a cinematic perspective, **Lucasfilm Games** has enabled thousands of gamers to relive the Battle of Britain. Welcome, honored veteran! CGW

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